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FA will rule today on Stevenage tie

THE INDEPENDENT

ON SATURDAY

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TOKEN COLLECT: TIME-OFF PAGE 17



Mo persuades the hard men to keep talking

In a dingy gymnasium inside the Maze prison, Mo Mowlam, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, outlined why she had met convicted loyalist terrorists: "Putting my case face-to-face, arguing it through with them, I thought was the best way of doing it so I'm here. No gun, no metaphorical gun, just a very constructive informed debate."

Maze's IRA prisoners, including a man serving life for the murder of two soldiers.

This was clearly a ground-breaking initiative which was last night viewed as a triumph for Ms Mowlam's determination to keep the process going, if necessary using the most unconventional and audacious means.

There were, however, some exceptions to the majority opinion that she had pulled off a spectacular political coup. Lord Alderdice, leader of the moderate Alliance Party, said: "Paramilitaries have hyped the whole situation up and the Sec-

Ms Mowlam gave the UDA prisoners a 14-point statement of government policy which she said contained no guarantees and no concessions to them.

The key section on prison issues declared: "We have a responsibility to maintain community confidence in the criminal justice system and in the political process."

"We are prepared in the talks liaison sub-committee on confidence-building measures to discuss parties' concerns and to work on an account of what would happen in respect of prisoner releases in the context of a peaceful and lasting settlement being agreed."

"But let me be clear there will be no significant changes to release arrangements in any other context or for prisoners associated with a paramilitary organisation actively engaged in terrorist activity."

While this clearly contains no guarantees of any early release programme, the prisoners are believed to have been impressed both by her decision to speak directly to them and by the indication that prisons issues now seem assured of a high place on the talks agenda.

Ms Mowlam said she had received messages from a number of people who had lost relatives in the troubles, adding that she apologised to those who had been offended by her initiative. Many others, she said, were supportive of the move.

BY DAVID MCKITTRICK

Within hours, her action was, in the eyes of most observers, triumphantly vindicated when the prisoners announced they had dropped their opposition to the talks process and were willing to give negotiations another chance.

Her dramatic action and its equally dramatic result mean that the Stormont multi-party talks will resume on Monday with much of the tension of recent weeks drained from the air.

It is now likely that all eight parties who left the talks before Christmas will be present.

Ms Mowlam's crucial meeting was with five members of the Ulster Defence Association, including Michael Stone, who is serving a battery of life sentences for six murders.

She also, almost in passing, met representatives of the

retary of State has fallen into their web. Both she and they can claim a great victory, thoroughly ensconcing them as the important arbiters of our future, not democratic politicians. It has made threats of violence more likely in the future."

His concerns were echoed from the Conservative backbenches by Nicholas Winterton MP, who described the move as "one of the most diabolical instances of pandering to terrorism I can think of." Most of the critics, however, were silenced by the fact her approach brought such a speedy success.



Keeping the faith: Children playing at Al Furqan Primary School in Sparkhill, Birmingham, yesterday. It is one of two Muslim schools that have become the first to be granted state funding. Full story, page 4

Photograph: Paul Rogers/News Team

TODAY'S NEWS

Phone inquiries to cost 40% more

British Telecom came under fire yesterday after announcing a 40 per cent rise in the cost of calling directory inquiries. At the same time, the former state-owned utility is considering a plan to return billions of pounds to its shareholders.

From next month, the charge for finding out a telephone number will go up by 10p to 35p. A telecom users group said that the increase was totally unjustified and an extra charge for a service which users should be getting for free. Page 22

Pregnancy warning

Women using the contraceptive method Persona, a handheld device designed to monitor their fertility, are much more likely to become pregnant than women using the Pill. The Government warned yesterday that, over a year, one in 17 women who use the Persona system could become pregnant. Page 4

Composer Tippett dies

Sir Michael Tippett, considered by some to be one of Britain's greatest composers since Elgar, has died at the age of 93.

Sir Michael's works included the oratorio *A Child of Our Time*, *The Vision of St Augustine*, and *The Mask of Time*, and the operas *The Midsummer Marriage* and *King Priam*. After the death of Benjamin Britten in 1976 Sir Michael was generally accepted as being the country's leading composer - though his radicalism and pacifism helped to ensure that the Establishment never clasped him to its breast. Obituaries, Page 20

Mystery blob on beach

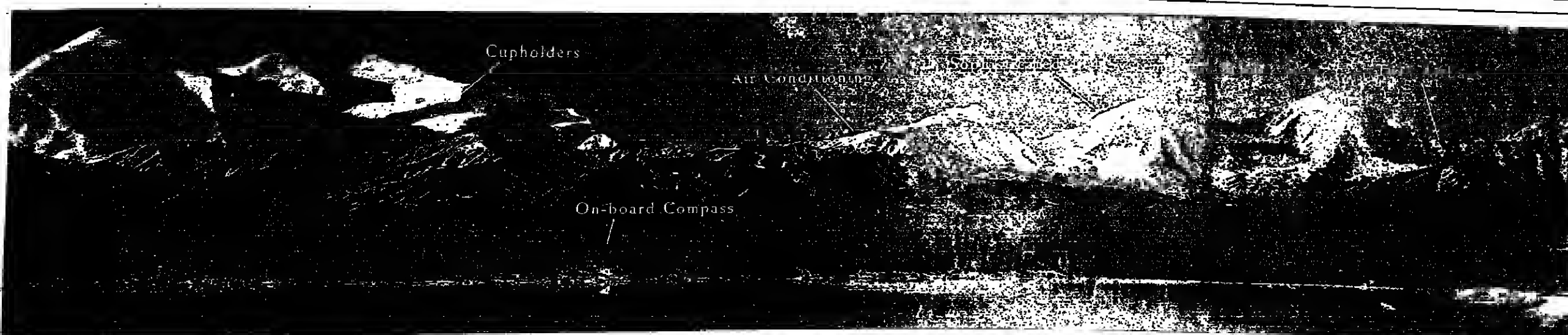
A large, smelly and hairy lump of matter which has been washed up on a Tasmanian beach is continuing to perplex scientists.

Some 20ft long, it weighs around four tons and seems to sport at least six tentacle-like legs.

In the past, decaying objects that have fetched up on beaches have been identified as rotting whale blubber, which does dehydrate to form leather fibres like those visible this time. However, you don't usually get "legs" or "tentacles" in blubber. Page 15

Time Off, page 2
The Eye
Time Off
pages 12 and 24

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Cupholders

ALL CONDITIONS

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COLUMN ONE

Millionairess is first lady of the theatre

Janet Holmes à Court, the Australian millionairess who owns 10 London theatres, and suffered a period of vilification when she first came to the West End, is now the most significant figure in British theatre. Each year *The Stage*, the weekly journal which is the bible of British theatre, assesses the major players on their achievements over the past 12 months.

Mrs Holmes à Court, 53, the widow of Australian businessman Robert Holmes à Court, runs the Stoll Moss West End theatre empire. When she first took over half a dozen years ago some theatre critics wrote vituperative pieces about her saying she would make the West End too commercial and eschew serious theatre. Instead, alongside refurbishing and redeveloping the theatres, she has staged challenging plays such as Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping And Fucking* and Ben Elton's *Popcorn* and supported new writers. "She backs new works when others shied away," claims *The Stage*. She has risen from sixth place last year in the top 100.

Last year's number one, Sir Cameron Mackintosh, has dropped to number two. He has two shows closing, *Martin Guerre* and *Oliver. The Stage* rates him "as successful as ever globally", but Mackintosh has had a quiet year in the UK.

Despite a mixed critical reception for the start of his artistic directorship at the National Theatre, Trevor Nunn is at number three "more in expectation of future success rather than current achievements". Far less vague are the reasons for the head of the West Yorkshire Playhouse Jude Kelly achieving the number four position. "Still the eminent force in regional theatre... her personal standing remains high in political circles and is rocketing internationally." Ms Kelly has just directed *Othello* in Washington DC with Patrick Stewart playing a white *Othello*.

THE TOP TWELVE

1. Janet Holmes à Court, theatre owner.
2. Cameron Mackintosh, producer.
3. Trevor Nunn, artistic director, National Theatre.
4. Jude Kelly, artistic director, West Yorkshire Playhouse.
5. Andrew Lloyd Webber, composer.
6. Thomas Holt, producer.
7. Paul Gregg, director Apollo Leisures.
8. Richard Eyre, former artistic director, National Theatre.
9. Max Stafford-Clark, director Out of Joint theatre company.
10. Peter Hall, director The Peter Hall Company.
11. Alan Ayckbourn, playwright.
12. Judi Dench, actress.

to failure". Harold Pinter is ousted from the top 20 after a quiet 1997. Outside the top 100, the most significant figures are not numbered from 21 to 100, but the citations are notable for turning adulation with the odd barb. Actor-director Steven Berkoff is called "the master of his particular field, but will be ever harness his talents to those of his contemporaries".

Of Alan Bennett, *The Stage* says: "Not much to speak of from Bennett recently, but he remains a key part of the regions' staple diet." Alan Bates is characterised as "never the household superstar he so often threatened to become, but still one of the most respected names within the industry".

Of the stranger citations, Deborah Warner wins a plaudit for being "more intellectual than your average director"; Tom Stoppard is lauded as "the intellectual powerhouse of the British theatre" which is followed by the caveat "if not to all tastes, as [his latest play] *The Invention Of Love* showed".

— David Lister, Arts News Editor

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PEOPLE



Title role: Spanish ballerina Tamara Rojo, 23, at the Albert Hall, London, yesterday in advance of the production in June of *Romeo and Juliet* by the English National Ballet. Photograph: PA

Professor rebuked for homeless jibe

A Cambridge University professor came under fire yesterday after listing one of his recreations as "daily avoidance of assorted professional beggars, alcoholics and deranged individuals in the streets of Cambridge".

Professor George Salmond's unusual pastime appeared in the 1998 edition of *Who's Who* alongside his other hobbies, which included: driving sports cars, good wine, malt whisky and comedy.

The head of a homeless charity in Cambridge said she was "horrified" that such a senior and learned academic could make such a comment and "very surprised" *Who's Who* had allowed it to be published.

The professor of molecular and microbiology who has also worked at Strathclyde, Edinburgh, Warwick and Kent, was unavailable for comment.

A spokeswoman for *Who's Who* said the entry had been written by Professor Salmond and editors had thought it suitable for publication. A spokeswoman

for Cambridge University "could not comment". Ruth Wyner, director of the charity Winter Comfort, said the comment would do nothing to help those working to improve the plight of the homeless. "I am absolutely horrified. I cannot believe *Who's Who* can print things like that," she said. "It is really ghastly. It does not sound like the comment of an intelligent person."

She added: "We get people from all sorts of backgrounds who find themselves on the streets, including students. I hope none of Professor Salmond's family ever find themselves on the streets."

Police said there were problems with aggressive begging last year.

Chief Superintendent Keith Hoddy, the officer in charge of Cambridge and its outlying areas, said: "There has been a problem in the past but I would say it is less than it has been now."

Raped Austrian tourist to marry police councillor

The Austrian tourist gang-raped by eight youths has fallen in love with the police officer who counselled her after the attack.

Alexandra Sablatnig, 33, met Constable Ted Grimwood, 56, after suffering a 45-minute rape and being thrown into a canal and left to drown by a teenage gang in September 1996. Their relationship began shortly after Ms Sablatnig's rapists were sentenced at the Old Bailey in London last April to a total of 89 years.

German-speaking PC Grimwood, who is separated but not divorced, flew to Vienna last May when the couple realised that they missed each other's company. Ms Sablatnig moved into the

police officer's home in Perivale, West London, in September with her two children and yesterday announced their plans to marry.

Ms Sablatnig, who waived her legal right to anonymity, said: "I know some people will think what has happened between Ted and me is unusual and others might think I am using him as some sort of support system. I am not. I love him for him, and believe we would have fallen in love had I been a shop worker and he a taxi driver. Ted does not remind me of the rape at all, neither does England."

PC Grimwood still works as a rape counselling specialist at Islington police station, near the canal in King's Cross, north Lon-

don, where the attack took place, but is said to be considering resigning from the force.

A spokeswoman for Scotland Yard said yesterday: "It is a personal matter for the officer concerned. If it is found he hasn't done anything during the investigation which warrants disciplinary action then we won't get involved."

Ms Sablatnig's marriage to Mario, 34, a train driver, broke up when he blamed her for the attack, asking why she did not return to London so she could be raped again. He said: "Now she is in a stable relationship it has helped us to become better friends... The attack tore us apart."

— Rosa Prince

Branson's Lottery libel case takes off

Instead of preparing for his latest attempt to fly around the world in a balloon, Richard Branson will be spending part of next week in a witness box at Court 13 in the High Court, in his long-awaited libel case against Lottery boss Guy Snowdon.

The courtroom clash, which opens on Monday, is the culmination of the Virgin boss's unsuccessful attempt to win the franchise for the British Lottery. Mr Branson later publicly accused Mr Snowdon, head of the US firm GTEch which has a stake in successful hiders Camelot, of offering to bribe him to pull out of the race.

GTEch and Mr Snowdon denied the claim, made on television, and Mr Branson then sued for libel claiming he was accused of being a liar. Mr Snowdon in turn has sued over the bribery claim. For some observers, the fact that Mr Snowdon has not sued the television programme where the bribery allegations were made — *Panorama* — suggests that the affair is personal; it seems certain that neither man will be spared personal attacks

during the bitterly-contested action before Mr Justice Morland.

Much of the case will centre on the exact interpretation of words Mr Branson claims his lottery rival Mr Snowdon used over lunch at the former's home in Holland Park, London, in September 1993. Mr Branson alleges that Mr Snowdon, an Anglophone American, said to him: "In what way can I help you, Richard? I'm sure everybody needs something," which he says was the offer of a hacker.

The two contrary libel suits are being "consolidated" into one action, with Mr Branson the plaintiff, and Mr Snowdon the defendant. Both have high-profile barristers, George Carman QC for Mr Branson and Richard Ferguson QC for his opponent.

After giving evidence next week, Mr Branson will concentrate on his next balloon voyage. If the winds are right there is the intriguing prospect of the case ending with Mr Branson giving his reaction from 30,000 feet.

— Michael Streeter, Legal Affairs Correspondent

Getty lawyer to head C4

The lawyer of the arts benefactor and millionaire John Paul Getty II has been appointed chairman of Channel 4. Vanni Treves, a partner in the City firm Macfarlanes, is also the lawyer for Richard Branson's family trusts.

Mr Treves succeeds Sir Michael Bishop, chairman of British Midland airlines and friend of John Major. His Tory connections helped fight off the threat of privatisation of the channel.

Mr Treves beat off competition for the job from Sir Colin Southgate, chairman of EMI, and Howard Dyer, non-executive chairman of Hamleys. Mr Treves has the combination of business experience and arts background that the channel needs. He is on the council of the National Arts Collections Fund and is chairman of the development board of the National Gallery. The main business challenge of the year at Channel 4 will be its launch of a digital film channel dedicated to arthouse films.

— Paul McCann

UPDATE

HEALTH

Gums link to heart disease

People with diseased gums may be more prone to heart disease — and not just because poor gums indicate a poor diet. A study published in the *British Dental Journal* suggests that there may be a direct causal link between gum disease and heart disease.

Evidence of the link appears to be strongest in men aged 40 to 50 and could put poor oral health as a significant risk factor alongside smoking and a fatty diet.

The most likely explanation for the link is that bacteria produced as a result of gum disease have an effect on clotting mechanisms in the blood which increase the risk of heart disease. However, 95 per cent of adults in the UK have some form of gum disease. The authors suggest that some people have an over-reactive natural body defence system which makes them more sensitive to the effects of the bacteria. However, they stress that the jury is still out although "the pile of circumstantial evidence is mounting".

— Jeremy Lawrence, Health Editor



CRIME

Licence-evaders' festive excuses

More than 10,000 television licence-evaders were caught in a two-week Christmas blitz, TV Licensing said yesterday.

Inquiry officers who worked over the festive period were kept amused by some of the excuses given by people caught without licences. One licence-dodger claimed she had asked Father Christmas for a television licence, but he hadn't delivered. Another officer visited a house one evening when the curtains were open and a television set was clearly visible. The occupier strongly denied owning a set, saying the officer has mistaken his Christmas tree lights for a television.

Another householder claimed his set was not in use but the enquiry officer noticed it was still warm. He explained his wife had set the turkey there to "rest" before serving.

In all, 10,021 licence evaders were caught in the fortnight's crackdown.

TV Licensing warned there would be further New Year blitzes across the country. Anyone caught without a licence risks a fine of up to £1,000. Mick Hill, director of TV Licensing, said: "We are delighted with the success of our Christmas campaign. However, we would prefer not to have to take anyone to court, and with so many easy ways to pay for a TV licence, such as monthly payments by direct debit, there should really be no need."

MOTORING

Alarm over elderly drivers

A leading safety group yesterday called for a review of the driver licensing system after recent alarming cases of elderly motorists travelling in the wrong direction on motorways.

Doctors should check older drivers more carefully before signing them as fit to carry on motoring after the age of 70, said the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

A pensioner died in a crash after driving the wrong way on the M11 in Essex on Thursday while an 87-year-old man survived after going 10 miles in the wrong direction on the M25 last week.

"The whole question of driver licensing needs to be addressed," RoSPA's road safety adviser Dave Rogers said.

He said: "Doctors asked to provide medical evidence of a driver's ability to continue on the road when they reach 70 should be aware of the moral responsibility they have."

"They must ensure that road safety considerations take preference to the doctor-patient relationship."

Mr Rogers said RoSPA advocated that regular health checks should be made on licence-holders which would ensure that those of advanced years were monitored more closely.

RoSPA is to debate the matter of licensing at a conference in Blackpool in March which is due to be opened by Roads Minister Baroness Hayman.

TOURIST RATES

| | | | |
|----------------------|--------|------------------------|---------|
| Australia (dollars) | 2.41 | Italy (lira) | 2,806 |
| Austria (schillings) | 19.96 | Japan (yen) | 208.44 |
| Belgium (francs) | 58.69 | Malta (lira) | 0.61 |
| Canada (\$) | 2.22 | Netherlands (guilders) | 3.19 |
| Cyprus (pounds) | 0.83 | Norway (kroner) | 11.74 |
| Denmark (kroner) | 10.89 | Portugal (escudos) | 209.09 |
| France (francs) | 9.51 | Spain (pesetas) | 240.39 |
| Germany (marks) | 2.84 | Sweden (kroner) | 12.57 |
| Greece (drachmai) | 452.74 | Switzerland (francs) | 2.31 |
| Hong Kong (\$) | 12.07 | Turkey (lira) | 329,622 |
| Ireland (pounds) | 1.13 | USA (\$) | 1.56 |

Source: Thomas Cook
Rates for indication purposes only

Nikki Sand in love split

Nikki Sand, the television weather girl whose first song "Good Girl Going" was released this month, is to break up with her long-time partner, Noel Hutton, she announced last night.

The on-off relationship with the footballer had been "something I have outgrown as a person", Ms Sand said in a statement issued by her solicitors. "Despite our past difficulties and Noel's lifestyle, he remains a firm friend and a sweet person." She had no other relationship and intended to devote herself to her new career. Hutton was reported to have punched a reporter who approached him about the split.

ZITS



by Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

IN MONDAY'S INDEPENDENT

**Deborah Ross in the
glossy world of Vogue's
Nicholas Coleridge**

FEATURES

**The Brit
awards: Who
needs 'em?**

THE EYE

**The murder
capital of
Britain**

NEWS

**Rik Mayall, Barry
Manilow, Kevin
Costner and Blake's
Seven**

THE EYE

**Meltdown
makes Asia a
paradise
for tourists**

The Asian economic crisis has sent prices plunging throughout the region. Beers can be had for as little as 20p, a Big Mac and fries for 35p, and a villa for £60 a night. Steven Vines samples the goods on offer.

The idea of a summer holiday in Bali must have seemed far too expensive for the average British tourist. No longer. The Indonesian currency has lost more than half its value against the pound in the past year, making Indonesia one of the bargain-basement destinations of the decade.

A villa with private swimming pool, big enough to accommodate a family, can be had for little more than £60 per night. While lounging by the pool you could be sipping an acceptable locally brewed beer for just 20p per bottle. In a bar the price rises to about 50p.

A reasonable European meal can be had in restaurants for around £4 a head, while an Indonesian meal with piles of satay, curries and vegetables would be about £2. If the children have a craving for a Big Mac and fries, a 35p price-tag will hardly prove an obstacle.

Then there is what to take home as gifts or trophies from the visit. For around £6.50 you can purchase a distinctively Indonesian ikat rug.

Most Indonesian hotels fix their prices in US dollars and so, in general, accommodation is not so much of a bargain as everything else. However, prices are hardly demanding. A new five-star hotel has just opened in the capital, Jakarta, and is offering rooms at just below £66 per night. Room rates at decent, but less luxurious three-star hotels can be had for as little as £30.

Indonesia is not alone in offering outstanding bargains. The meltdown across the region has left few countries untouched. The most popular Asian tourist destination is Thailand, where the currency has halved in value over the past

year. Not only has it gone down but the whole country seems to be on sale. "The big shopping centres need the cash flow," says Wivachai Boonyapak, of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) in Bangkok. Just before the new year TAT organised a "Thailand Grand Sale", which brought prices to new lows.

In Thai markets, shirts are going at £1.50 and silk blouses can be had for little more than £2. Even the best Thai clothing is half-price. Jim Thompson ties start at just over £6 and exquisite silk blouses from the same source cost just over £30.

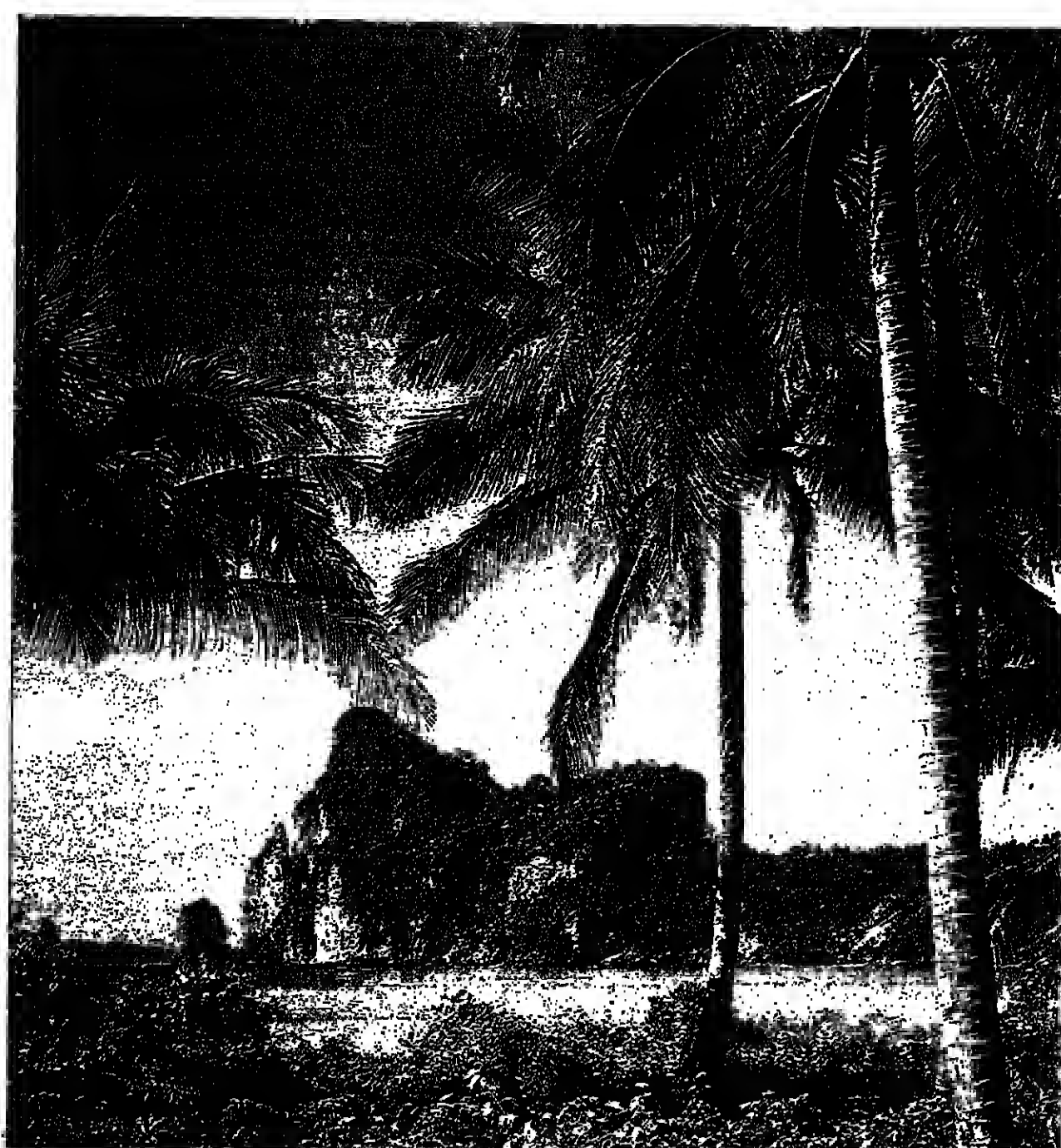
Eating out in Thailand has never been expensive - but now it is ludicrously cheap. A meal in a first-class restaurant will only cost about £9 per head. At less fancy places where the food is still good, expect to pay around £4.

The real bargains are in hotel-room prices. It is now high season on the island of Phuket but rooms in four-star hotels cost no more than £25 a night. When the high season ends next month, rooms will be on offer for about half this amount. One of Thailand's biggest hotel chains, the Amari group, is offering rooms for the first night at around £25. The second night is free.

In Malaysia, where the currency has fallen in value by over 40 per cent, the bargain basement is not quite as full as elsewhere but there is plenty of good value. Most hotels are offering special rates at the moment, says Adina Borhan, the spokeswoman for the Hilton Hotel group in Malaysia. She gives the example of the Hilton Hotel in Sarawak, where room rates have gone down to about £30. "Hotels are trying to push companies to have meetings in Malaysia," she says. "It's definitely cheaper here".

A meal at one of Malaysia's eat-til-you-drop buffets cost no more than £4 per head in a restaurant. Washing down the buffet with a beer would set you back no more than 90p. Malaysia just beats Thailand in the Big Mac price stakes, offering its version at under 50p.

It all makes Benidorm look a tad pricey.



A country on sale: Tourists have cashed in as Thailand's currency has halved in value in the past year. Photograph: RHPL

But political unrest could pose trouble

The Asian financial turmoil is great for holders of foreign currency but something more like a nightmare for most citizens of the countries whose currencies have been decimated. The downside for travellers could be political unrest. Steven Vines reports.

The longer-term impact of the Asian economic crisis may be to bring simmering political tensions in the region to the boil. "It's a great time to come here unless you have a concern about unrest," says Diana Moxon, a travel consultant based in Jakarta.

In Indonesia, where the financial crisis has hit hardest, the army has been put on a stage-3 alert. This means it is on alert for trouble even though it has yet to break out.

However, tension is very close to the surface. It was seen in food shops this week which were swamped by anxious shoppers

worried that food might disappear and that their money would become worthless.

If the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has its way, the government will be forced to cut the subsidies, primarily the fuel subsidy, which make the difference between millions of people living above or below the poverty line.

A stockbrokers' report issued in the capital Jakarta yesterday stated that 80 per cent of public companies would be bankrupt if foreign banks refuse to roll over loans due for repayment in the near future.

"There are no riots on the streets, but you can feel an atmosphere of tension," said a Jakarta resident. The tension has already boiled over in Bandung, a city with a large student population, where minor rioting was reported earlier in the week.

The usually meek local media has started openly to criticise President Suharto, whose authoritarian government has no ready-made means of transition to another form of rule. The President and his entourage, who are widely perceived as having

made fortunes during his period of office, will not disappear quietly into the night.

Meanwhile, in Thailand, the financial crisis has already brought down one government and brought in another headed by the generally well-regarded Chuan Leekpai. Because Mr Chuan has a reputation for honesty, expectations of his ability to put things right are high. Yet the local currency and stock market are caught in a relentlessly declining spiral, and companies are closing.

The new government has a lot of enemies, some of whom are in the military and have the ability to cause considerable disruption. In Malaysia, the Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, still has a firm grip on government despite tensions within the ruling party and an undercurrent of criticism over his outspoken attacks on foreign investors which have fuelled the massive slump in Malaysian financial markets.

Holidaymakers in South-east Asia need have no immediate concerns about running into civil unrest, but they should be aware of the tension beneath the surface.

**Lowest fares ever
tempt travellers
to the Far East**

The collapse of the Asian currencies has had some positive aspects - yesterday British Airways tried to boost business to China with its lowest fare yet. And Simon Calder, Travel Editor, reveals that British business travellers are squandering a fortune by buying tickets here rather than abroad.

January to March is traditionally a buyer's market for economy fares, but this winter the discount-flights business is offering even lower prices. Many of the bargains are to Asia, where airlines have experienced falling inbound traffic as a result of economic chaos. To fill the planes, they are forced to offer fares as low as £299 to China's capital and back.

Some passengers could be business travellers aiming to cash in on distortions in international fare structures, amplified by the weakness of Asian currencies. Air travellers who fly to Asia now could buy up their ticket requirements for the whole year ahead - and save thousands of pounds.

For many journeys, Independent research shows, Bangkok and Seoul are the ideal places to buy tickets, wherever your final destination might be. To reach Santiago in comfort, the obvious choice is British Airways' Club World. It is a monopoly on the route to the Chilean capital from London, and charges £5,023 return.

Yet if you buy a BA Club World ticket from Bangkok to Santiago, flying via London, the fare falls by two-thirds to £1,714 - even though you are travelling almost twice as far.

Air fares are one of the few surviving global commercial stitch-ups. Airlines belonging to the International Air Transport Association fix fares between themselves, resulting in high prices for travellers who need flexibility - mainly people flying on business. But these fares are not immediately adjusted after wide currency swings.

Anyone aiming for Lagos in luxury should buy a ticket in South Korea; the weakness of the won means the Seoul-London-Lagos return first-class fare has shrunk below £2,500,

saving more than a third on the London-Lagos ticket alone.

Complex regulations can entangle the unwary traveller. If, for example, you wish to break your Bangkok-Santiago journey in London, the fare doubles to £3,583 - but this still saves nearly £1,500 on the normal London-Santiago fare.

The fluctuations can also mean some flights become virtually free. A one-way London-New York Concorde fare costs £3,500; travelling from Jakarta to London in first adds only £350 to the price. Of course, you need to get to the Far East in the first place. Discount agents were yesterday quoting one-way fares to Bangkok as low as £240 on Aeroflot via Moscow, or on Uzbekistan Airways via Tashkent.

A fares war has also broken out across the Atlantic. Fares announced yesterday have returned to levels last known 20

It pays to fly from Asia

Fares quoted yesterday by British Airways for fully-flexible tickets travelling via London, inclusive of pre-payable taxes.

| Club World in South America | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|
| London - Santiago | £5,023 |
| Bangkok - Santiago | £1,714 |
| (£3,583 with stop in London) | |
| First Class to West Africa | |
| London - Lagos | £3,760 |
| Seoul - Lagos | £2,488 |
| Concorde to New York | |
| London - New York | £3,500 |
| Jakarta - New York | £3,850 |
| (subsidised First Concorde to London) | |

*years ago, when Laker's Skytrain was in operation.

British Airways yesterday matched Virgin Atlantic's cuts, reducing return economy fares to Boston and New York to £189. One reason why fares have fallen so sharply since the start of the year is a new Advertising Standards Authority rule requiring advertised fares to include pre-payable taxes. BA is advertising Amsterdam for £79, saving £20 on its lowest fare before the rule came into effect.

As usual, travel agents are undercutting the official fares still more. The London discount specialist Flightbookers was yesterday offering flights from Gatwick to Boston or New York on a Continental Airlines/Virgin Atlantic codeshare flight for £170 return, for travel until the end of March. When the tax element is stripped out, the base fare collected by the airline is as low as £120 for 7,000 miles of air travel.

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Giant puddle: Children out walking risk wet feet inside their wellingtons yesterday as water levels around York rose after heavy rainfall overnight

Photograph: Owen Humphreys/AP

Muslim schools win historic fight for state funding

The first two Muslim schools to receive state funding were announced by the Government yesterday. Judith Judd, Education Editor, explains how an 11-year fight came to an end.

For years Muslims have complained that white middle-class parents could send their children to religious schools free while Muslim, often working-class, parents had to pay.

Previous governments twice turned down applications but now David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education, has agreed Muslims should be allowed state-funded schools in the same way as Anglicans and Roman Catholics. The two

schools are the Islamic primary school in Brent, London, founded by Yusuf Islam, formerly the singer Cat Stevens, and the Al Furan primary school in Sparkhill, Birmingham. At present, parents at both pay fees. Two Jewish schools will also get public funding - the Mathilda Marks Kennedy primary school in Barnet, London and a new Jewish primary school in Hertsmere, Hertfordshire.

Last month the Islamic school threatened to sue the Government because it had received no decision on an application for state-funding submitted a year earlier.

The three existing schools have been given grant-maintained status but will be expected to become voluntary-aided, like other church schools, under a Bill which abolishes

grant-maintained status by 2000.

Mr Blunkett is also expected to approve a new Jewish Orthodox primary school in Hertfordshire.

Officials made it clear that the Government had consistently said that applications for state funding would be decided on their merits.

Previous applications have been turned down because buildings or the curriculum were unsuitable or because there were already too many school places in the area.

Mr Blunkett yesterday reassured critics of state-funded Muslim schools that boys and girls would be treated equally and the national curriculum, which has brought complaints from some Muslim parents, would be taught. "I am pleased to be able to approve sound pro-

posals which demonstrate that these new schools will comply with the statutory provisions governing all maintained schools, such as delivering the national curriculum and offering equal access to the curriculum for boys and girls."

Schools have to meet criteria which include a good standard of education, the national curriculum, suitably qualified staff, equal opportunities for boys and girls, suitable buildings and financial competence.

Zafar Ashraf, a spokesman at the over-subscribed Islamic school, said the school, which charges £2,200 a year, faced a shortfall of £250,000 this year. "For many years Muslim parents have, through their taxes, been funding schools for other denominations. This has caused great anger and resentment."

Trevor Phillips, page 19

Women warned over contraceptive

One in seventeen women using the contraceptive Persona for a year could get pregnant, the Government warned yesterday. Glenda Cooper, Social Affairs Correspondent, says a warning letter has gone to all GPs and family planning clinics following an investigation.

which best suits their needs. But for women who must do everything to avoid getting pregnant this year, for these couples Persona is clearly not the method of choice."

Persona, hailed as the highest family planning breakthrough since the 1960s, works by measuring a woman's hormone levels from urine tests and tells her when she can have sexual intercourse yet not conceive by "traffic light" signals.

Launched in October 1996, the product, backed by the Vatican, ran into controversy when it was reported that by April 1997 more than 400 women said they had become pregnant while using it. Marie Stopes International estimates that every month 60 Persona users seek abortions, and the British Pregnancy Advisory Service said it had seen almost 200 women over a 13-week period seeking advice after using the device.

The letter sent yesterday to GPs and family planning clinics says that because of Persona's "technological" basis "expectations... may be higher than for other forms of contraception" but that it is "basically a test-based form of the rhythm method".

Persona manufacturer Unipath said it welcomed the investigation which it claimed added further support for the device by its conclusion that it was a useful addition to the contraceptives already available.

Court challenge for toll road

The decision to build the nation's first privately financed toll road is to be challenged in the High Court by an alliance of local residents and environmentalists.

Ministers gave the go-ahead last July to the £370m Birmingham Northern Relief Road (BNRR), which runs through two sites of special scientific interest and 27 miles of Green Belt. Campaigners suspect that John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of transport, approved the controversial road partly because of a penalty clause, said to top £30m and payable to the private consortium building the dual three-lane motorway, if it was cancelled.

The Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, however, has refused to release the concession agreement with the road's builders - saying that it is "commercially confidential". The Alliance Against the BNRR, an umbrella group representing the resident associations along the route, have launched a High Court action to get the commercial agreement released.

— Randeep Ramesh, Transport Correspondent

Diggle to face tribunal

Angus Diggle, the solicitor jailed for attempted rape after a Highland ball, is due to appear before the Solicitors' Disciplinary Tribunal next Thursday, it was learned yesterday.

He hit the headlines at the Old Bailey trial in August 1993 when he was said to have punched on his victim, a 25-year-old Edinburgh solicitor, wearing only the frilly cuffs from his traditional Scottish outfit, his glasses and a green condom.

He had escorted the woman to a St Andrew's Day Ball at the Grosvenor House Hotel in Park Lane. He was said to have later told police: "I have spent £200 on her. Why can't I do what I did to her?" He was jailed for three years, reduced to two on appeal, and released after one year in Leyhill Open Prison.

Karpov remains champion

Anatoly Karpov is still the Fide (International Chess Federation) world chess champion. After a dramatic quick-play play-off match against his challenger, Viswanathan Anand, Karpov, 46, yesterday won the £850,000 prize and retained the title that he first won in 1975. The six-game match was the first championship played under a knock-out format in which Karpov, as defending champion, went directly into the final. Anand, 28, had to work his way through seven strenuous rounds to challenge him.

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Labour denies plan to end pageantry

A report that the Government is planning to jettison the age-old pageantry of the State Opening of Parliament was yesterday repudiated by the Leader of the Lords.

Anthony Bevins, Political Editor, looks at the limits to New Labour modernisation.

The need for the Lord Chancellor to walk backwards from the Monarch, trudging the steps leading from the throne in the Lords, was questioned by Lord Richard, Leader of the Lords, yesterday.

But he denied any suggestion that ministers were discussing an end to all the sumptuous pageantry associated with the Queen's Speech opening of Parliament, generally staged each autumn.

In a newspaper interview yesterday, Ann Taylor, Leader of the Commons, was quoted as saying that there were hints of the state opening that seemed "peculiar" and were being reviewed by Lord Richard and Lord Carter, the Government Chief Whip in the Lords.

Lord Richard told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme that there was no question of the entire ceremonial being changed. "As far as the state opening of Parliament is concerned," he said, "this is essentially a matter for the Duke of Norfolk, the [Queen's] Earl Marshall.

"It's not a House of Lords ceremony; it's one which is under his control and if indeed any discussions are going to take place, they'll have to take place with him."

He then added the strong warning: "We'd have to go through a pretty hefty procedure in order to get it changed."

Lord Richard said the limits of his ambition for change were currently confined to the introductory ceremony for new peers and the Lord Chancellor's backward walk.

"Another one which I am casting my eyes at is the prorogation ceremony, where I sit down and do nothing except take my hat off seven times, which doesn't seem to me to be the most profitable use of anybody's time."

As for a suggestion that the frequency of state openings might be reduced - from one a year - Lord Richard was equally dismissive.

"There's talk in the same way as there's always talk about this sort of thing," he said, "but there's no specific proposal."

However, he added that he, personally, was not in favour of any curtailment. "If you have a Queen's Speech," he said, "it sets out a legislative programme and on the whole it produces a certain amount of discipline for the legislative powers that be to stick by."

The Commons committee on the modernisation of Parliament is examining other, more substantial, changes to long-standing procedures, including the use of smart cards for MPs voting in the House.

That could mean that they would not be required to return to the voting lobbies for every vote, but could use special swipe cards in other parts of the parliamentary estate.

At one stage ministers had argued that there was a value in MPs being forced back to the Chamber, where they could meet and discuss issues of concern with ministers - even the Prime Minister - on an informal basis. That argument has to some extent fallen away because of the infrequency with which Tony Blair and some other senior ministers return to the House to vote.



Peace fighter: Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, at the Maze yesterday with (left) the governor of the prison. Ms Mowlam's meeting with loyalist prisoners about the talks process lasted several hours. Photograph: Brian Harris

Brown's leadership bitterness

Gordon Brown's Labour critics were yesterday rejoicing that the Chancellor's friends had again indicated his bitterness over Tony Blair's decision to snatch the party leadership from his grasp in 1994.

It has long been known that Mr Blair had previously agreed that he would not stand against Mr Brown, and that Mr Blair was persuaded after the premature death of John Smith that he must renege on that pact because, in the view of his supporters, he would make a better leader.

But the fact that Mr Brown and his allies still nurture their grievance over the issue three years later, after Labour's landslide victory and Mr Brown's appointment as Chancellor of the Exchequer, yesterday delighted his many party critics.

Evidence that the sore still festers is provided in a new biography of the Chancellor, extracts of which began to leak on Wednesday.

Paul Routledge, the political correspondent of the *Independent on Sunday*, whose biography is to be published shortly, says in the book: "Privately, Brown's friends believe Blair let him down, and there can be little doubt that they represent his feelings accurately. Blair repeatedly promised Brown he would not stand against him in a leadership election."

One ministerial source said Mr Brown's "overpowering ego" would eventually prove his undoing, as it had proved the undoing of Denis Healey and Nigel Lawson before him.

The difference with Mr Healey, if the impending biography of the Chancellor is to be believed, is that Mr Brown has a strong powerbase within the party - something that could yet ensure his succession to Mr Blair.

Some of Mr Brown's party opponents - a band that has been increased by the threats he is said to be instigating against welfare benefits for the disabled and other vulnerable groups - have noted that he continues to cultivate support.

One ministerial source said that he had held a Christmas party at Number 11 for Labour Party constituency secretaries, and he is said to be assiduous in maintaining an alternative powerbase within the party at large.

— Anthony Bevins, Political Editor

These modern nuptials are so New Labour

Tony Blair would have been there, but he is in Japan. Gordon Brown will be among the guests. Andrew Buncome previews a wedding which is likely to be one of the high points of New Labour's year.



Labour pairing: Ed Balls, special adviser to the Chancellor, and Yvette Cooper, MP for Pontefract and Castleford, who are to be married this afternoon



minster was equally unforthcoming, saying only: "Of course she is excited about it. It's her wedding day."

Mr Balls - something of a television star, following this year's documentary series tracking the Chancellor's spin doctors - did have a stag night, organised by his best man, Tom Linden. It was, by all accounts, a fun-packed, fashionable and varied occasion.

It kicked off with an afternoon watching Arsenal play Port Vale before cocktails at Quagline's and then dinner at Pont de la Tour, the upmarket restaurant near Tower Bridge renowned for its modern French cuisine and for being the place where Tony and Cherie dined with Bill and Hillary.

"It was a very respectable event, as you would expect from a group of respectable gentlemen," said one of the eight revellers. It is not known whether Gordon Brown, who will be accompanied today by his girlfriend Sarah Macaulay, was one of the eight.

le, er, trendy, bear in mind this wedding is New Labour. About as New Labour as you could conceivably get.

The wedding couple is Ed Balls, the affable special adviser to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Yvette Cooper, 28, formerly a leader writer on *The Independent*, but now firmly ensconced as Labour MP for Pontefract and Castleford.

The civil ceremony is to be held at the Cavendish Hotel at Eastbourne at

3pm this afternoon. At 4pm guests are invited to high tea before cocktails and then dinner and dancing later this evening. The Cooper-Balls, known for throwing good parties at their home in Islington, are unlikely to disappoint on this occasion.

Ms Cooper, an Oxford graduate with a first in PPE, was yesterday keeping silent about her special day, declining even to say whether she'd had a hen night. Her assistant at West-

In keeping with the best traditions, details of the dress are a closely guarded secret. Likewise the honeymoon destination. The guests will drink champagne - but then again, wedding guests often do.

At that point much of the tradition ends. Guests have been invited to bring even their youngest children: a baby-sitting service and special entertainment will be available. The couple are marrying this afternoon in the hotel where the reception is taking place, and tomorrow morning all 300 guests are invited to brunch. If it all sounds a lit-

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PM's wife to oppose unions on pensions in House of Lords

The case against hundreds of thousands of workers - mostly women - getting better pension rights is to be put to the House of Lords by a legal team in which Cherie Booth is a prominent figure. **Barrie Clement, Labour Editor, looks at the implications.**

The Prime Minister's wife is a senior member of a legal team resisting claims for enhanced pension rights for hundreds of thousands of Britain's lowest paid workers, most of whom are women. As a leading barrister, Cherie Booth will stand to earn a lump sum of around £25,000 plus £2,500 a day for court appearances, although her chambers last night refused to comment on her remuneration.

The critical hearing begins a week on Monday at the House of Lords which will decide whether part-time employees qualify for back payment of pensions bringing them into line with full-time colleagues. Leaders of the Unions public service

union yesterday declared their confidence that they would win and that it could cost the Government and the private sector more than £100m.

Apart from her identification with the Labour Party, Ms Booth's involvement is ironic because the additional rates being sought would mean that most of the workers would cease to qualify for social security benefits at a time when the Government is determined to reduce dependency on the state. Doubly ironic is the fact that the Government is one of the employers fighting alongside Ms Booth who is representing local authorities.

Ms Booth will argue that she is simply doing her job and that she is operating on the "cab rank" principle by which barristers simply take the first client that comes along. However, it is not the first time that Ms Booth's career has been at odds with her husband's position in the Labour movement.

Rodney Bickerstaffe, Unions general secretary, said he hoped the Government would accept the fairness of giving part-time workers full pension rights. "New Labour quite properly say

they are different and we believe that this is a matter of social justice," Mr Bickerstaffe said. ".... If we win it will send a signal to women in particular that they are valued. I would hope that the Government would treat this realistically and that we don't have to fight a rearguard battle. We consider pensions to be deferred payments and we believe that part-timers have been robbed by the system."

In their fight to win equal rights for part-timers, unions have lost cases at an industrial tribunal and in the Court of Appeal. However, they believe that a new ruling from the European Court of Justice last month will mean that the law-lords will give a decision in their favour. The bill for extra pension payments will fall on the Government, local authorities and a number of private employers.

Unions believe that a typical example of a worker who would be affected by the ruling is a woman who worked half-time for her local authority. Her pay would have been around £6,000 a year and the extra entitlement would be £750 a year in pension payments and another £2,250 as a lump sum.



Fuel for thought: Peter Mandelson, minister without portfolio, emerging yesterday from Kellingley Colliery at Knottingley, West Yorkshire. He was visiting the RJB Mining pit to reaffirm the Government's support for the coal industry. Photograph: Asadour Guzelian

Hague calls for inquiry into Welsh referendum vote

William Hague last night demanded an urgent, independent inquiry into the Welsh assembly referendum count.

Anthony Bevis, Political Editor, reports on the growing concern over irregularities.

a "startling and worrying picture of inconsistencies in the procedures for the counting of votes" in the referendum.

The report said that three methods of counting had been used, giving conflicting results from the 22 different counts in the principal on the night of 18 September, when the assembly was approved by a slender majority.

The central confusion was over a double negative - whether the word "No", written against the ballot paper statement, "I do not agree that there should be a Welsh Assembly" should have invalidated the vote and created a spoilt ballot paper.

In some parts of Wales, such papers were counted as No votes, in others they were deemed spoilt - while the count in Neath-Port Talbot accepted only papers marked with an X.

Mr Hague said last night: "I believe it is now essential that we have an independent inquiry

to look into all the allegations of irregularities in the count.

"To particular, such an inquiry must consider the guidance issued to each council on how to determine valid votes cast and whether this guidance was at any stage altered; if the guidance was indeed altered, we need to know whether this was done, who authorised the changes to the guidance and why, and whether any returning officer was informed of the new guidance and applied it consistently; and the scale of any inconsistencies in determining valid votes cast."

He said the people of Wales had a right to expect that the UK's high election standards would apply. "This week's revelations have cast doubt over whether this holds true for the Welsh referendum. It should be a matter of urgency that the questions raised are addressed by an independent inquiry."

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Battle breaks out over dead poet's final resting place



Pillow fight: Landlord Tom Watts and his wife Meresa on Dylan Thomas' oak-framed bed

Photograph: Huw Evans

A piece of furniture that once belonged to Dylan Thomas is at the centre of a tale involving some of Britain's biggest celebrities. Andrew Buncombe follows the trail of the bed that everybody wants to sleep in.

Brown's Hotel in Laugharne is an imposing establishment with a facade of white painted stone, set on the main road from Carmarthen.

It is a popular place, and both locals and tourists visiting the South Wales town enjoy its unchanging atmosphere. But many visitors are unaware of a piece of furniture within the hotel which is causing – as they say in these parts – a bit of a fuss.

A 50-year-old bed is at the centre of a battle for ownership that involves a rock star, a poet's daughter and James Bond (or at least the actor who plays him).



Dylan Thomas: Still causing trouble

Like many things in Laugharne, the bed has connections with the town's most famous son, Dylan Thomas. Unlike many things in Laugharne, the connection between the bed and the poet are not in doubt: it is Thomas's bed, rescued

from the cottage where he lived before his death in New York in 1953. The bed is currently used by a long-term resident who lives in a flat in the hotel. But that could change.

Thomas Watts, the landlord, who has owned the bed for the past 26 years, recently received a "substantial offer" for it from the actor Pierce Brosnan. He said he believed Mick Jagger also wished to buy it.

Brosnan, a Dylan Thomas fanatic who named his son after the poet, visited the area last year while on a fishing trip. He stopped off at the hotel and made an offer for both the bed and a table at which the wayward genius used to sit with his equally wayward wife Caitlin, who died in 1994.

"I told Brosnan about the table and the bed and he made me an offer for both but I have not accepted," said Mr Watts, 66. "I understand that Mick Jagger is also very interested in them, but they are staying put for now."

Jagger's interest in Thomas is such that his film company,

Jagged Films, is soon to start work on a film about Dylan and Caitlin's relationship. Whether the singer actually intends to make an offer for the bed is less clear. A spokeswoman for Jagged Films said he did not plan to buy it.

The battle for the bed takes a further twist through the involvement of Thomas's daughter, Aeron Ellis.

"She came in here and said she wanted the bed back in the family," said Mr Watts, whose hotel is close to St Martin's church where Dylan and Caitlin are buried. Mr Watts said the bed was a gift from Caitlin for his help in selling Thomas's cottage, The Boat House, in the early Seventies.

"The cottage was cleared out and there were a few bits and pieces left, including the bed. Caitlin said I could either keep it or throw it out."

Mrs Ellis denies making any fuss. "I would like to own it as I don't have anything of my father's. But I can't compete against the likes of Pierce Brosnan."

Comfort and coffee in book megastores

An American bookshop chain is planning to bring its cosy mix of sofas, story-telling and coffee shops to Britain. Louise Jury reports on the browsing revolution that is transforming book buying.

American booksellers Borders will open a shop of 39,000sq ft with 150,000 titles in Oxford Street, central London, this summer to offer Britons the chance to choose their books in comfort.

The move, to be followed by a store in Leeds by the autumn, will confirm a trend that has made the coffee shop an integral part of the book-buying process in shops selling perhaps four times the number of titles of traditional rivals.

The superstore which Waterstone's opened in Glasgow last year incorporated a coffee shop and comfortable chairs to encourage readers to take their time over their purchases.

Books etc, the British chain bought by Borders for £40m a couple of months ago, already offers the option of a cup of coffee in several of its 22 shops.

A spokeswoman for Books etc and Borders said it was all about "lifestyle bookselling" – making the shop into a community base with more in it to interest the customer. The Borders chain also sells music and videos alongside paperbacks.

"In the past, people weren't encouraged to browse and read the books. But people want to take their time and make sure they have got the right book," the spokeswoman said.

At the 180 Borders shops in the United States, regular cus-

tomers spend hours thumbing through the books without so much as a raised eyebrow from the staff. Special events include story-telling sessions for children and even Saturday evening pyjama parties for youngsters. It is still to be decided which of the US features will be transported into the British stores, which will operate alongside the Books etc chain under the Borders name.

A spokeswoman for Waterstone's said the reaction to the Glasgow store, which holds 150,000 titles, had been "fantastic". It had "amply exceeded" its sales targets and they were now looking for more superstore sites.

But Waterstone's had also recently opened its smallest shop – a 1,500sq ft site in the City of London. "There is not just an obsession with size," the spokeswoman said. "We want to listen to the audience and cater to it. In the City, they want to be in and out quickly."

Tim Rix, chairman of the National Book Committee, which brings together publishers, retailers and authors, said superstores were welcome if they encouraged more customers. "But the fear is that it might lead to a price war, which would eventually lead to the demise of the small independent bookseller, leaving smaller towns bereft."

But Brian Perman, director of the Book Trust which encourages reading, welcomed anything which encouraged people to buy more books.

"The revolution in book-selling has been the recognition that buying books is a pleasure pursuit like going to the cinema and requires bookshops to open when people are not working and where the ambience is really important," he said.

Music chief quits at 'dumbing down'

The director of one of Britain's largest series of outdoor music concerts has resigned in protest at the "dumbing down" of classical recitals.

Michael Webber, who has run the concerts held at English Heritage properties including Kenwood House, in north London, for 12 years, has left 16 months before the end of his contract. He criticised the move away from the standard symphonic concerto repertoire towards shorter pieces and snatches of classics that were less demanding for audiences.

The problem was not confined to English Heritage, who put on concerts from Northumbria to Cornwall, but was widespread, he said. "It is part of a much greater cultural trend which I find difficult to accept."

Mr Webber, 71, said he was sad that the music did not seem

to be the priority for many of the audience and that the picknicking, which is a feature of the evenings, had taken over.

He also questioned whether it was necessary to have fireworks at the end of every concert, although he accepted the commercial pressures for doing so. Fireworks add a couple of thousand to attendance figures.

However, English Heritage rejected charges of dumbing down. A spokeswoman said jazz and popular music had formed part of the programme for some years. Events this summer will include Cleo Laine and John Dankworth and an evening of Andrew Lloyd-Webber music.

"There's a popular demand. We acknowledge the concerts have to be a commercial success. They bring people into a property where they can enjoy music in beautiful surroundings."

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Radio watchdog on guard as Evans talks up his sponsors

Chris Evans' style of broadcasting allows him to take in everything around him and use it as humour. But Paul McCann, Media Correspondent, warns that the DJ is in danger of overstepping the mark.

The radio industry's watchdog is investigating the Virgin Radio breakfast show after complaints by listeners about the way he talks about the programme's sponsors during his show.

The Radio Authority, which regulates commercial radio stations, has requested a tape of one of Chris Evans' shows and has already had discussions with the station about so-called "product placement" - where a broadcaster's mentions of a sponsor's products during a show cross the line between editorial and advertisement.

According to rule six of the authority's sponsorship code DJs are not permitted to endorse a sponsor's product or service within the editorial of a show. Instead sponsor's credits are usually at the beginning and end of shows or before traffic round-ups and weather reports. However there is a grey area where DJs can mention commercial products, including the sponsor of the show, as long as it is not seen as an explicit endorsement.

The listeners who have complained feel that Evans' use of a sponsor's name as part of an extended humorous "rap" with his team in the studio may be



A word for our sponsors: Chris Evans with Holly Sams, a member of his radio team, who risk being rebuked for not supporting advertisers Photograph: PA

breaking the RA's code. For instance, on Thursday morning Evans even declared on air that his sponsors got good value from him.

Earlier this week the company owned by Chris Evans which owns Virgin Radio, Ginger Media Group, signed a £3m sponsorship and programme development deal with the satellite broadcaster BSkyB. Following this deal the DJ has started comparing BSkyB programmes with BBC ones. While the humorous implication of Evans' skits is that the BBC's programmes are dull compared to those of BSkyB, he has been careful not to explicitly recommend that listeners watch BSkyB. Instead he ends the skit by saying that listeners can decide for themselves what to watch. Virgin is known to believe that this protects the

DJ from accusations of endorsement.

In addition to the sponsorship deal the DJ is known to have become good friends with Elisabeth Murdoch, the daughter of Rupert Murdoch, owner of BSkyB and programming director of the satellite channel. The two have been seen and photographed out on the town together, including at a reception at Downing Street. The other main sponsor of the show is the Czech beer Pilsner Urquell. Again, the breakfast show "zoo" - Evans' on-air radio team - hooted when one of them said she had never drunk the beer and Evans said she had been told off for her lack of support.

"This is a matter that has been discussed and we will monitor the station," says David Lloyd, the Radio Authority's head of programming and advertising. "The dangerous thing is if mentions of a product become endorsement by being

gratuitous rather than of editorial merit."

The authority has already rejected one complaint from a listener and is investigating another. Mr Lloyd believes the concern with Chris Evans is that his style of broadcasting takes in everything happening to him and all that surrounds him: "Chris Evans is known for testing the boundaries. Given his track record we contacted Virgin to show them the rules".

John Pearson, Virgin Radio managing director, said: "It is our intention to stay within the guidelines. However, it is also our intention to be innovative in the way we use sponsorship and make it interactive with the programme."

What better way to celebrate the New Year?

Cricket may get Tango'd in bid to ditch stuffy image

The English Cricket Board has appointed one of the hippest advertising agencies in Britain to revamp the game's image. Paul McCann hears why the game needs a makeover.

Picture the scene: a gentle English summer's day, 13 men in white on a village green and the sound of leather on willow. Then a man in an orange wig runs on to the field and bludgeons the batsman with a huge inflatable orange hand. Cricket has been Tango'd.

The image is not so far-fetched. To the horror of many a retired colonel, English cricket has hired the advertising agency responsible for the Tango ads to update the image of the game and make it appeal to a younger generation.

HHCL & Partners, who have swept every award in the advertising industry with weird and wonderful work for Tango, made a name for themselves as the saviours of outdated products. From Martini to Pot Noodles the agency has rescued the image of the unfashionable, the naff and the dull, so they should be perfect for cricket.

"There are some perceptions that aren't helpful in attracting a new and younger audience to the game," says Richard Masters of the ECB,

who admits the game is seen as old-fashioned and class-ridden. "We want to blow away a few of those traditional images to make it more of a current game to younger audiences. We want to give it more general, positive values. HHCL has done this for other brands and cricket is no different."

If traditionalists are likely to be shocked by the description of cricket as a brand they will have to wait until the summer to see what HHCL comes up with to "reposition" that brand. A £1m campaign will start this summer and run through to the Cricket World Cup in 1999. The ECB hopes the World Cup, when teams will play in coloured clothes for the first time in England, will do for it what Euro 96 did for football.

More optimistically, the ECB hopes the World Cup and HHCL's advertising can turn around the perception that the game is run by upper-class twits: "We want it to build confidence in the sport and in its administration and in the way that it is run. Euro 96 achieved lots for the Football Association and we want to do a similar job for cricket."

The ECB needs to revamp cricket's image, so that it can sell 500,000 tickets for the World Cup, when 12 teams, including less glamorous sides like Scotland and Kenya, will play 42 matches around the country in May and June.

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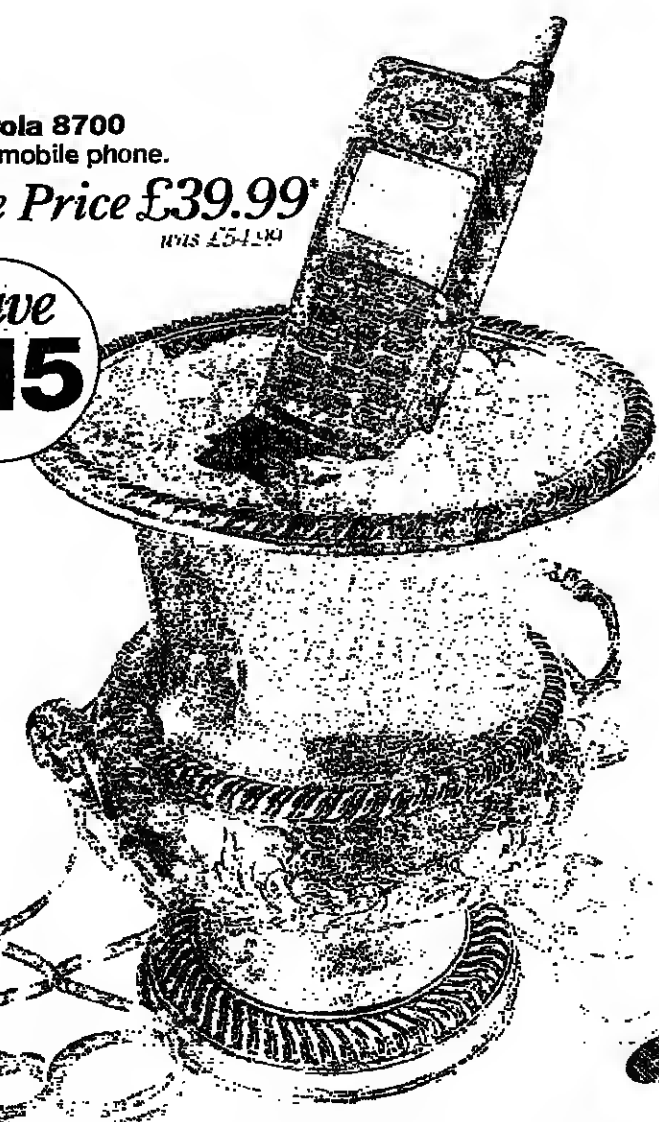
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Chefs feel heat as mushrooms go on conservation menu

A move by wildlife conservation groups to limit mushroom picking has met with squeals of outrage from London chefs who say fungi are vital to their cooking. Rosa Prince looks at the ingredients for an environmental row.

Conservation groups including the National Trust and English Nature say over-picking is harming rare mushrooms and the woodland animals who live off them.

But London restaurateurs deny the use of mushrooms such as penny buns, slippery-jacks, horns of plenty, and giant puff balls is damaging.

Antonio Carluccio owns the Neal Street Restaurant in Covent Garden which uses mushrooms in 30-40 per cent of its dishes. He said: "Mushroom picking has been going on all over the world for thousands of years."

"Up to 20 years ago English people associated mushrooms with black magic instead of something good to eat."

"It is only in the last few years that we have got into continental food and so into mushrooms."

"In other countries mushrooms are very much part of gourmet food and I don't see why we can't enjoy them here."

The chefs' call to keep one of their favourite ingredients on the menu comes as the National Trust joins with English Nature, the British Mycological Society, the Woodland Trust and the Forestry Commission to draw up a code of conduct for pickers.

They say restrictions are needed to stop commercial pickers who take large numbers of rare mushrooms for export abroad, and to curb over-zealous harvesting by individuals.

The problem is particularly bad in the New Forest, Hampshire, and in parts of Scotland where some forests

are said to have been stripped of mushrooms.

The National Trust itself has received donations from the sale of wild mushroom soup made by the New Covent Garden Soup Company, and still appears on its packaging. Company spokeswoman Katie Kame said: "When we offered to donate money they were concerned about where the mushrooms came from. We import from China and Eastern Europe so it was all right and we went ahead."

John Harvey, head of nature conservation at the Trust, said: "The basis of our concern is reports of commercial collection by companies who either export the mushrooms or sell them to London restaurants."

"People are going out with rakes and raking up the mushrooms which kills animals and other plants. The parallel is with deep-sea fishing which has decimated some species of fish."

Restaurateurs, too, are keen to stress their commitment to conservation. Rose Grey, of the River Café in Hammersmith, west London, said: "When we buy for the restaurant we go to commercial pickers who go on organised mushroom picks in places where there are plenty."

The River Café uses fungi in its risottos, ravioli and omelettes. When larger mushrooms are available they roast them stuffed with pancetta and thyme.

Dr Brian Johnson, a botanical adviser to English Nature, said the restrictions would not limit mushroom enthusiasts who picked a few for their evening meal. He said: "We have no intention of stopping the collection of mushrooms altogether. But taking large quantities in a way that is doing harm must be stopped. The guidelines would limit the amount people collect and ban certain damaging methods."

Dr Johnson said the code would be voluntary but if it was ignored, conservation groups would seek legislation or the licensing of commercial pickers.



Kitchen magic: The chanterelle mushroom (*Cantharellus cibarius*) - a much sought-after variety with a cap measuring 2-10 cms and a superb flavour with a distinctive smell of apricots

Britain a paradise for fungi eaters

The British Isles are a haven for mushrooms - almost all varieties grown worldwide can be found here. The season runs from mid-late summer through autumn, although some varieties continue outside this time. Wild mushrooms favoured by top restaurants include:

The penny bun or cep (*boletus edulis*) is the most popular wild mushroom. It often grows near golf courses, sometimes beside the poisonous fly agaric (*amanita muscaria*). Penny buns should not be washed or peeled and are excellent in stews and sauces.

Chanterelle (*cantharellus cibarius*) are plentiful in Scotland. They are a deep yellow and are said to smell of apricots. Chanterelle are found in mossy woods and are often cooked with scrambled eggs.

The horn of plenty (*craterellus cornucopioides*) is an unusual blackish colour and tastes best with white fish such as halibut, sole or monkfish.

Giant puffballs (*langermannia gigantea*) can be big as a football - just one can feed a whole family. May be sliced and deep fried or grilled.

The wood blewit (*leptista nuda*) grows in abundance in Britain, but take care cooking it as it is poisonous when raw. They are in season well into the winter.

Morrels (*morchella elata* and *morchella esculenta*) are very expensive and very rare. Must be distinguished from the false morel (*gyromitra esculenta*) which is poisonous.

Slippery Jack (*scleroderma*) live under trees and have a slippery surface - hence the name. They are good in stews.



The giant puffball: Big as a football, can feed a family



The wood blewit: Must be cooked to detoxify



Slippery Jack: Good in stews

Blair British on Eu

Tony Blair wants to see the top ranks of the Eurocracy with Britons. But the hurdles in the way of new EU civil servants are high. Katherine Butler reports

British Eurocrats - 15,000 in total - were based in Brussels, London, and other offices this week for a meeting to discuss the new EU civil servants are high.

As Britain takes over the top ranks of the Eurocracy, the Prime Minister's office is expected to let all the new civil servants know the work which they will be doing. The work will be done in the new EU civil servants are high.

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TOMORROW IN THE SEVEN-SECTION

INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY



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Decriminalise cannabis - the latest news in the campaign that everyone is talking about

Britain basks in warmest winter day for decades

After storm, flood and tornado, Britain experienced record-breaking warmth yesterday. The mildest January day for decades saw temperatures reach almost 15 C (59F) at several recording stations as warm winds blew from the South-west.

England and Wales have already had most of the entire average rainfall for January, with little more than a quarter of the

month having passed. The river Severn and its tributary, the Vyrnwy, are threatening to burst their banks and thousands of homes in Gloucestershire have been placed on red alert. Local council workers have been issuing sandbags to homes in vulnerable areas.

At Sandhurst in Gloucestershire two men who became stranded used a mobile phone to call emergency services after taking

refuge on the roof of their car. They were eventually spotted by the crew of a police helicopter using thermal imaging equipment, and were taken off by dinghy.

Meanwhile, the US government has confirmed the UK Meteorological Office's finding that 1997 was the world's warmest year since global records began a century ago.

Nicholas Schoon

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Jobless scorn Jospin's aid offer as cracks begin to show in coalition

The French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, appeared to have failed yesterday to halt a spreading protest movement by the unemployed, which threatens to undermine his coalition government.

Mr Jospin offered a new £100m "emergency" aid fund for the long-term jobless and invited leaders of unemployed pressure groups to take part in an investigation of the failings of the French benefit system. But he specifically ruled out the protesters' two principal demands: a £300 end-of-year bonus and a substantial increase in the minimum social payments to those out of work.

Such an increase, he said, would "turn upside down, even

explode" the government's entire economic and social strategy, based on "growth and employment". It would cost "tens of billions of francs" and destroy all calculations on public spending this year. Although he did not directly say so, it would also put France outside the fiscal guidelines for the single European currency.

The Socialist premier's announcement, at a televised press conference, was greeted with hoots and whistles and cries of "hypocrite" at many of the score or more employment insurance offices occupied by activists all over France. "It's nothing but crumbs as usual... Obviously, he has completely misunderstood our message."

The unemployed can't wait any longer," said Serge Havet, regional co-president for the Nord-Pas de Calais region of ACF, one of the three pressure groups running the protest campaign.

At another occupied office at Gennevilliers in the Paris suburbs, a protester said: "Eight billion francs [£800m] for the World Cup, a billion francs for the unemployed. Who's kidding who?"

Mr Jospin made it clear that he expected the protesters to abandon the sit-ins, which have been snowballing since before Christmas, and allow the employment offices to go back to work. The occupations have been legitimate, he said, as a

way of drawing attention to the "anxieties and preoccupations" of France's 3 million jobless, including 1.2 million long-term unemployed. But such actions could be justified only for "a while" and the sit-ins should now end.

Leaders of the demonstrations were considering the government's proposals last night but all the indications were that the action would continue. This is the first time that the French unemployed have taken part in a sustained protest movement. One of the problems facing Mr Jospin's government is that - unlike a strike by the employed - there is little incentive for the protesters to go back to doing nothing.

The dispute has already exposed the fault-lines in Mr Jospin's coalition, with Communist and Green ministers publicly cheering on the protesters. The central problem is that the protests strike at the heart of Mr Jospin's awkward boast to have kept his election promises from last May. He was elected on a commitment to help the unemployed and a pledge not to impose a freeze on public spending to meet the economic and monetary union targets.

His decision to recognise the unemployed pressure groups also annoyed the moderate trades union federations, which regard themselves as the legitimate voice of the jobless.

— John Lichfield, Paris

Germany isn't working and Kohl is in a fix

Confronted by the spectacle of ever-lengthening dole queues, Chancellor Helmut Kohl conceded yesterday for the first time that his government will not fulfil its pledge to halve the number of unemployed by 2000.

"It now appears this absolute goal will certainly not be achieved. But I am holding on to the goal of cutting unem-

ployment as fast as possible." Mr Kohl first made his promise two years ago. At the halfway mark to the millennium, unemployment stands 500,000 higher than two years ago. In recent months the Chancellor has been trying to wriggle out of his rash commitment. On current trends, even his new goal of merely trimming the numbers

might soon have to be abandoned. Yesterday saw publication of the latest monthly figures, showing again nothing but an inexorable rise, and setting another negative post-war record. According to the Federal Labour Office, the seasonally adjusted jobless figure rose last month to 4.54 million for the first time. The jobless

rate is 11.9 per cent, twice as high as in Britain or the US.

While the German economy, growing at 2.5 per cent, is set to expand further this year, experts anticipate little change in unemployment. Some pessimists are even forecasting a rise to 5 million. There is every chance of Mr Kohl going to the polls in September with the

worst record for any chancellor in post-war Germany. "We must simply change," he declared yesterday as his party prepared to thrash out its election strategy behind closed doors. "We" in this case was meant to be Germany, as Mr Kohl does not see what he could have done better during his 16-year rule.

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Models at Munich fashion show wearing gala robes by Gai Mattiolo, who used Venetian frescoes as patterns for the embroidered tops
Photograph: Ursula Dueren

Only masculine ministers allowed in the French Cabinet

Should a French Cabinet minister always be a "le" even if, in other respects, she is a "la"? Yes, says the Académie française, the 362-year-old police force for purity of the French language. In an open letter to President Jacques Chirac, the Academy has rebuked female members of the Jospin government for insisting on the title "Madame la Ministre", even in official publications. Nothing in their ministerial powers, the Academy thunders, "confers on them the right to amend, by their own will, the grammar and usages of the French language".

In French a mouse is always *une souris*, even if he is a male mouse, declares the Academy. A frog is always *une grenouille* even when he is a male. Thus, it is clear that a French Cabinet minister must always be *un*

ministre, even if she is a woman. "Le ministre" is a masculine word in French; the gender of the minister is irrelevant. The issue has been made more pressing by a record eight women in the Jospin Cabinet. The Académiciens, sometimes known as the Immortals, are writers and scholars elected for life to pronounce on, among other things, proper grammatical usage. They include two women who have agreed never to be called Académiciennes. They suggest female Cabinet members are not only committing "grammatical nonsense" but undermining the feminist cause. By creating the neologism "la ministre" they are segregating themselves linguistically within the government. If that is what they want, it will lead to other "ridiculous" develop-

ments such as "la première ministre" and "demagogic" developments, current in Quebec and Belgium, the Academy notes - such as "une écrivaine" for writer, or "une sapeuse-pompier" for a female firefighter. The education minister, Ségolène Royal, retorted yesterday that "nothing in society is fixed". Certain words should be either feminine or masculine, according to the gender of the person involved. "When the academicians say masculine is a universal gender, I say to them gently but firmly 'no'. Diversity is universal," said Ms Royal. "It may seem a daft debate... But it betrays the kind of conservatism which prevents societies from moving forward."

— John Lichfield, Paris

Man dies in Basque blast

A conservative councillor in the Basque region in Spain died in a car-bomb explosion yesterday morning in what seems to have been the first attack this year by the separatist organisation Eta. Jose Ignacio Irureta Goyena, 35, who represented the ruling Popular Party in the Basque town of Zarauz, near San Sebastian, was the fourth PP local politician to be killed in the past three years.

The last victim was Jose Luis Caso from Renteria, shot in the head last December, and before that the killing of Miguel Angel Blanco in July brought millions out in protest against Eta violence.

Some former Eta leaders, serving prison terms or in exile abroad, recently criticised the organisation's terror tactics and urged steps towards dialogue with mainstream Basque nationalist forces. The government publicly insists dialogue is out of the question, and the constant stream of threats and attacks indicates that Eta's hardliners remain in control.

— Elizabeth Nash, Madrid

Mermaid's head returned

The sawn-off head of Copenhagen's Little Mermaid statue was recovered yesterday and police said it was undergoing laboratory tests in the search for the vandals.

The missing head of the city's best-loved monument and tourist attraction turned up in a box outside a television station. "Apart from the damage done by the saw which was used to cut off the statue's head, it is in remarkably good condition with only a few scratches," said detective chief superintendent Niels Abildgaard. "The return of the missing head does not mean that the case has been solved, so the search for the culprits is going on. We have a lot to investigate."

— Reuters, Copenhagen

Cult leader 'had chemicals'

Spanish police said yesterday that they had found poisonous chemicals at the home of an alleged doomsday cult leader which they believe were to be used in a mass suicide by her 32 followers.

Police spokesman Juan Antonio Perez said the German psychologist Heide Fitkau-Garthe, who was arrested on Wednesday when police foiled the suspected suicide plot, had "brainwashed" her disciples and they would need to be "de-programmed". The group had planned to kill themselves at the top of Tenerife's Teide volcano.

Moscow murder

The director of the Rossiya Hotel in Moscow was shot dead yesterday in an apparent contract killing, police said. His predecessor had also been killed. Yevgeny Tsymbalistov, 49, was shot twice with a 9 mm handgun as he was leaving his home.

— AP, Moscow

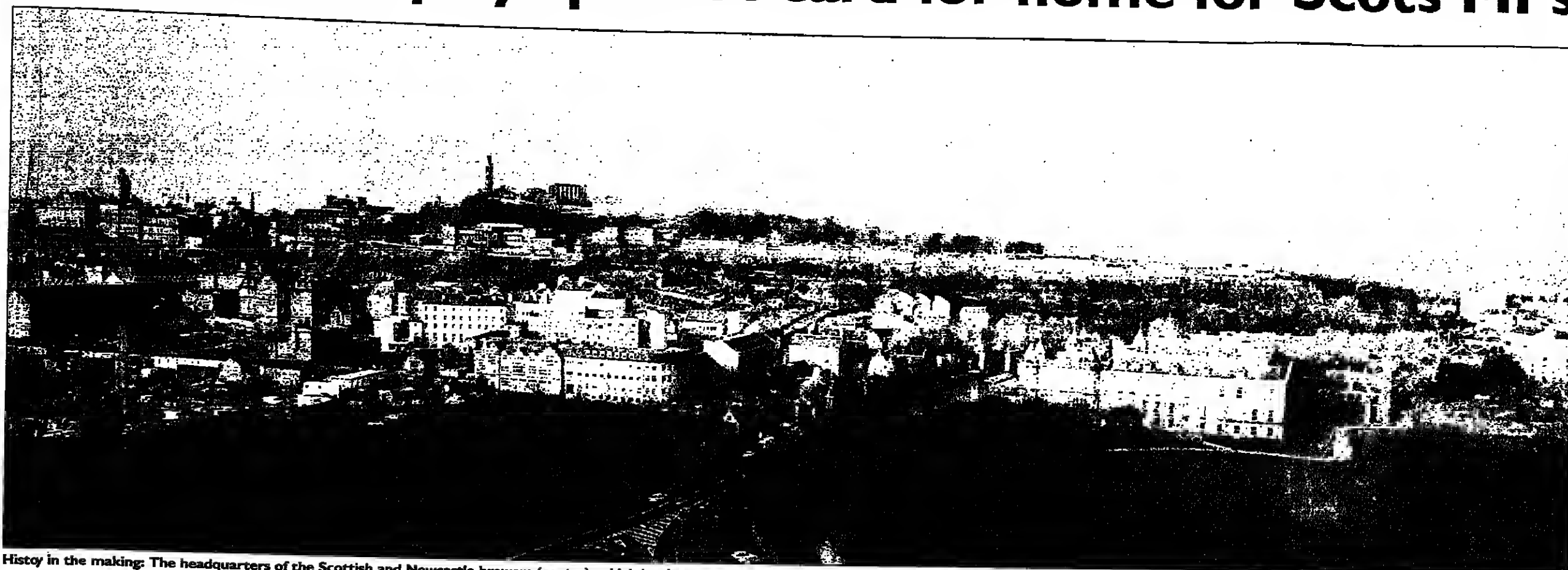
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Home sou
Welsh Ass

Canny Dewar plays patriot card for home for Scots MPs



Histy in the making: The headquarters of the Scottish and Newcastle brewers (centre), which has been earmarked as the site for the Home Rule Parliament

Photograph: Colin McPherson

Scotland's first parliament for 300 years is to be built adjacent to Holyroodhouse, the Queen's official residence in Edinburgh. Stephen Goodwin reports on what looks like a smart decision by Donald Dewar, the Scottish 'prime minister in waiting'.

Robert the Bruce held a parliament at Holyroodhouse in 1296. Donald Dewar, the Secretary of State for Scotland, pointed out yesterday as being bolstering the significance of the chosen site for the Home Rule Parliament.

Under fire from the Scottish nationalists, he was demonstrating his customary shrewd touch. Calton Hill, the site favoured by the SNP and the Liberal Democrats, might boast an imposing collection of national monuments, but Holyrood has the more ancient pedigree. Who better to cite than the victor of Bannockburn?

The four-acre site, at present the headquarters of the brewers Scottish and Newcastle, lies at the foot of the Royal Mile, running from Holyroodhouse to Edinburgh Castle. It has been a royal route since 1128, when David I founded the Abbey of Holyrood, as Mr Dewar emphasised. "I am convinced that when future generations look to the decision... they will applaud the choice to create a new symbol for Scottish democracy..."

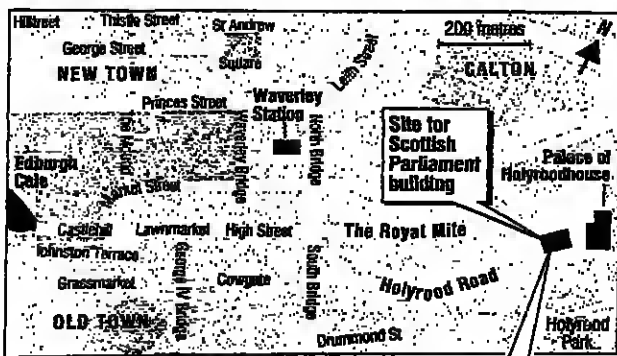
Holyrood only entered the running just before Christmas.

The brewers will have moved out by April 1999, work on the site will begin soon after and the new Parliament is due to be completed by the second half of 2001.

However, that will leave the 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) homeless for at least two years from their election on 6 May 1999. Temporary halls being considered by the Scottish Office include the city council chambers, the general assembly hall of the Church of Scotland and the old Royal High School on Calton Hill, converted for use as a parliament in the 1970s, though acknowledged last year as too small.

The debating chamber will be horseshoe-shaped rather than the two sword lengths between opposing benches of the Commons. This reflects Mr Dewar's wish that the parliament should be "an enduring symbol of the new politics". A competition is to be held to choose a designer for the building. Estimates for the cost of the building alone begin at £50m, with the total bill predicted to be around £80m - double the top figure in last summer's White Paper.

Mr Dewar was originally thought to favour a site by Leith docks, adjacent to the new Scottish Office building, while his political opponents and the Edinburgh establishment were rooting for Calton Hill. In opting for Holyrood, Mr Dewar, who on Thursday declared his intention to stand for the new parliament, has skillfully avoided a climb-down over Calton Hill while getting his way for a modern building.



Home sought for Welsh Assembly

Battle has been joined over the location for the headquarters of the 60-strong National Assembly for Wales, which comes into being next year.

Local authority buildings at Wrexham, Mold, and Ewloe in North Wales have come under scrutiny and Neath Port Talbot Council has offered Margam Park, vast Gothic pile just off the M. But the contest is by general consent between Cardiff and Swansea, the principal cities.

Cardiff has all along been the choice of Row Davies, the Secretary of State for Wales. City Hall, replete with opulent interiors, marble columns and a city centre location - was first in his sights, but the council rejected a £3.5m offer as insufficient to meet the costs of relocation.

In the next few days, nine organisations will pitch to have the assembly housed in the city. Several sites are mooted in the Cardiff Bay area which is being transformed from Old Docklands to New Leisurelands.

In Swansea, the council is pushing the claims of its Guildhall, and a CD and video package extolling the city's virtues was released this week. A decision is expected early in March.

— Tony Heath



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Blair says reforms will go Full Monty

Tony Blair started his visit to Japan yesterday by promising "to go the Full Monty" in reforming the British economy. He also insisted that Britain's failure to join the first wave of European Monetary Union would do nothing to deter Japanese investment. Richard Lloyd Parry observed the response in Tokyo.

In a cultural allusion that puzzled many Japanese members of his audience, Mr Blair referred to the hit film about a group of unemployed northerners who make a living as strippers, in explaining his vision for Britain. "When it comes to putting our economy on a secure footing for the long term, we intend to go the Full Monty, to use the

vernacular," Mr Blair said at a dinner gathering of senior Japanese diplomats, businessmen and politicians, few of whom had the remotest idea what he was talking about. "To those who may not know what that means, it is an expression of absolute determination," he added.

Mr Blair and his team are in Japan for five days and, behind the polite diplomatic platitudes, they have two principal goals. The first is to dispel Japanese unease about the Government's failure to take part in the first wave of Emu, and to maintain Britain's position as the leading beneficiary of Japanese investment in Europe. On this count they yesterday claimed a prize.

Within a few hours of landing in Tokyo, Mr Blair announced a project by Toyota, which will expand its engine plant in Deeside, creating 310 jobs with an investment of £150m. This was especially welcome given the fuss last year

when Toyota's president, Hiroshi Okuda, hinted that Britain's absence from Emu would jeopardise inward investment.

"This underlines the view of much Japanese business that Britain is the most competitive place for manufacturing cars in Europe," said Mr Blair. "[The ability of] Japanese companies to trade with the rest of Europe in the euro will be assured."

But he failed to point out that the Deeside plant will be supplying engines to a much bigger car factory, awarded to France after Britain's attempt to win it failed last month. And few analysts believe that Britain is likely to win any more big auto investments in the medium term.

Mr Blair's second goal is to replace the typical Japanese perception of Britain, as a picturesque, traditional land of pageantry, fog and Beatrix Potter, and focus, in Mr Blair's words, on "Britain's creativity, vigour and youth, its dynamism today".



Outcasts: Two Vietnamese boys peer out from behind the fence at Pillar Point refugee camp in Hong Kong. The island authorities yesterday scrapped the rule allowing boat people to stay in Hong Kong while applying for refugee status. Photograph: Peter Parks

US air traffic controllers forced to use pen and paper

Fear of flying in the United States was fuelled further yesterday after aviation authorities in Oakland, California, revealed that the computerised air traffic control system covering the Pacific collapsed for no less than 16 hours earlier this week.

The video display system that tracks all aircraft crossing from the American West Coast to destinations in Hawaii and South-east Asia suffered a total failure when engineers were trying to install new software. Roughly 500 aircraft, many of the jumbo jets, were affected, officials said.

During the Pacific black-out, which began on Wednesday

evening, traffic controllers at the Oakland centre were reduced to tracking the progress of planes with pen and paper.

Government officials insisted that passengers were not seriously imperilled, in part because of the sheer size of the airspace involved - 18 million square miles, or one tenth of the Earth's surface.

The controllers themselves expressed concern, however. "Was there any real danger that two planes would collide? No. Was there an increase in the potential danger? Yes," said Mike Ballard, president of the Oakland chapter of the National Air Traffic Controllers' Association.

The software installation that caused the fritz is part of a nationwide effort by the US government to upgrade air traffic control system that has long been criticised for being antiquated and prone to meltdown.

Another control collapse caused major delays and reroutings across the Midwest just before Christmas.

Blaming the Federal Aviation Authority for this week's incident, Mr Ballard commented: "It's another example of the FAA's failure to modernise in a timely manner, which is leaving the public at risk."

— David Usborn, New York

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S Leone job for ex-envoy

Britain yesterday appointed a retired diplomat as the its special representative to Sierra Leone.

John Flynn, 60, a former ambassador to Angola, will work with the United Nations and regional officials to galvanise regional and international efforts to restore the democratically elected government of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah.

His first task will be to convene a meeting of interested parties at the United Nations in New York on Thursday, said Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary.

The democratically elected government of Kabbah was overthrown by a military coup last May.

An agreement between the military junta and members of the Economic Community of West African States to restore Kabbah to office by April appears stalled.

AP, London

Shelling out

An egg with a series of mottled brown ridges that appear to spell out "Allah is great" in Arabic will go on display in a mosque in Cape Town, one of the men who found the egg said yesterday.

The egg was bought from a farmer on Monday by a group of Muslims holding religious classes at Macassar, about 40 miles from Cape Town.

One of the men, Faizel Eksteen, 45, said the wording was a sign that God exists. "If I see an atheist now, I will show him proof," said Eksteen.

The egg has been handed over to a mosque in Cape Town's Woodstock suburb and will be displayed there, Eksteen said, adding that he hoped that it could then go on a tour of the Cape Town area.

— AP, Cape Town

Observers endorse Kenyan elections

An observer group drawn from Kenya's main Western aid donors gave a qualified endorsement on Friday to the East African country's multi-party elections, saying they reflected the will of the people, despite flaws.

The Donors' Democratic Development Group, which includes European Union missions and the United States, commended the discipline and determination of Kenyan voters.

In a two-page statement the observers highlighted a series of problems with the election before their conclusion.

"As to an overall assessment of the election, we note the con-

clusion of the domestic observers that the results on the whole reflect the wishes of the Kenyan people. Based on our own election observation exercise, this conclusion seems justified and reasonable," the statement said.

The Western observers said political reforms passed late last year came too late to be properly implemented and access for opposition parties to state media was too limited. The observers deplored bribery, intimidation and some instances of violence on polling day and cited a shortage of ballots as the main problem.

— Reuters, Nairobi

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Kraken on

Is it a dead dinosaur? A
terrible shark? The last
remains of Mr Blobby?
One thing's sure - it's
big, smelly and on a
beach. Beyond that, says
Science Editor,
nobody seems to want
to commit themselves.

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Kraken or tree trunk? Mystery blob from the deeps confounds the experts

Is it a dead dinosaur? A rotting shark? The last remains of Mr Blobby? One thing's sure - it's big, smelly and on a Tasmanian beach. Beyond that, says Charles Arthur, Science Editor, nobody seems to want to commit themselves.

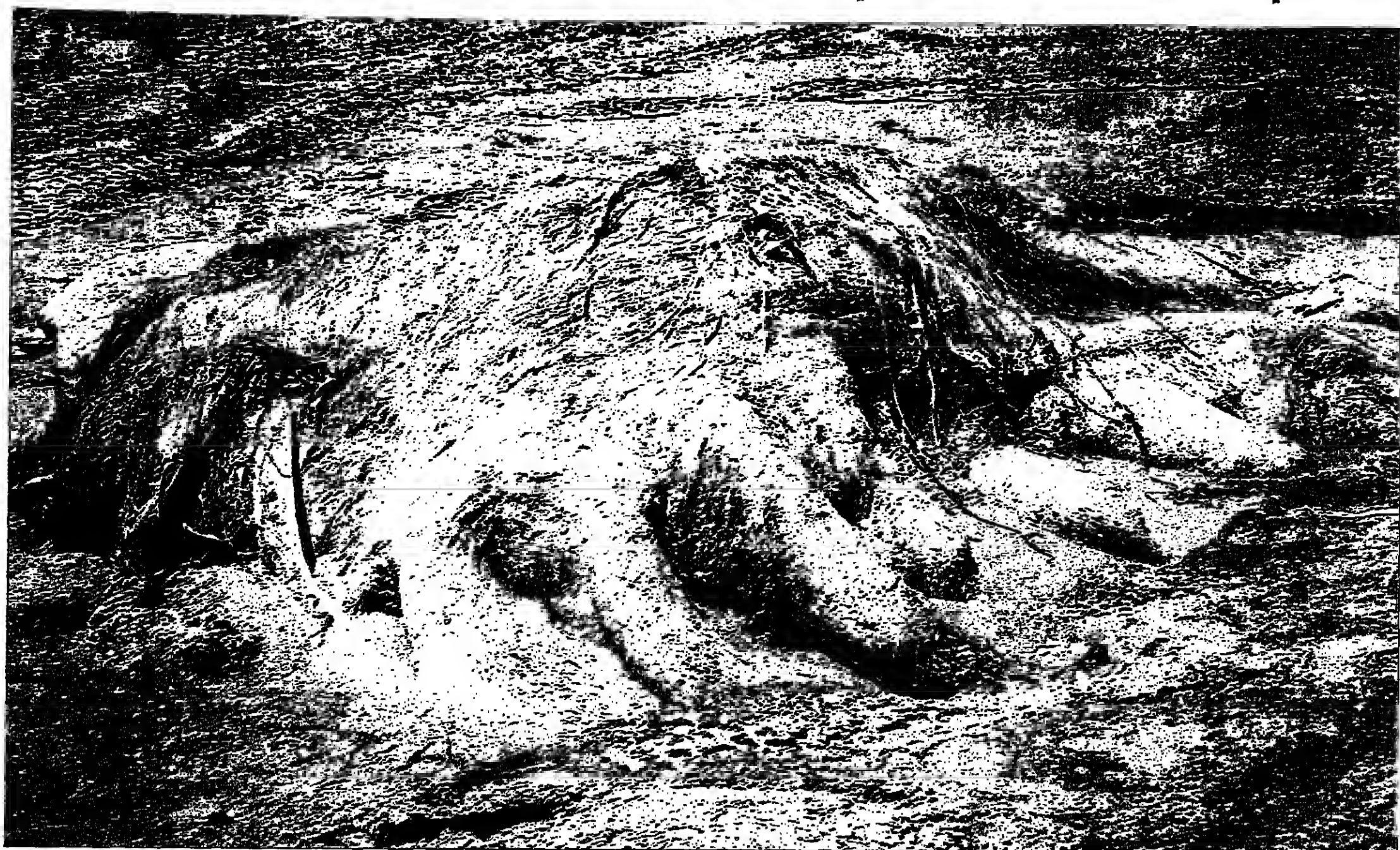
Is it animal, vegetable, or mineral? We can at least say that it's not mineral. But for the moment, it is very hard to be any more specific about this huge mass of matter that washed up on Four Mile Beach in Tasmania earlier this week.

Despite the recent disagreement between the BBC and Noel Edmonds, this is not believed to be the corpse of Mr Blobby, sacrificed as an offering to the Gods of Programming. But if you do happen to have lost a twenty-foot, four-tonne, fishy-smelling, fibre-covered object apparently sporting at least six tentacle legs (or leggy tentacles) recently, maybe you could get in touch with the coastguard there.

In the meantime, scientists are puzzling over what this ... Blob could be. In the past, decaying objects that have fetched up on beaches have been identified as rotting whale blubber, which does dehydrate to form leather fibres like those visible in the photograph. However, you don't usually get "legs" or "tentacles" in blubber.

Marine biologists are used to getting asked about strange beached objects. "There is certainly a recurrence of things about 15 to 20 feet long being washed up," said Oliver Crimmen of the Natural History Museum yesterday.

Certainly, Reports have come from as far apart as Scotland, Russia, New Zealand and South Africa, and positive identification (if you can be positive of something so form-



Something fishy: The mysterious object found on a Tasmanian beach. It may be a giant squid. On the other hand, it may be something else ...

Photograph: Rick Eaves

less) at least back to the 1920s. "They generally turn out to be rotting basking sharks," explained Mr Crimmen. Aha! So could the Blob be an ex-shark? "They can grow up to 34 feet, and rot down to something like a sea monster," said Mr Crimmen. "Of course,

whales can too ... and elephant seals ... and squids." Yes, but what about this one? "Hmm. Well, judging from the photos, and what they show of the 'legs' and 'hair' - well, they don't add up to the decomposition of any known organism. We haven't ascer-

tained yet even whether it's an animal. The fact that it is reported to smell fishy doesn't mean much - any marine thing with sediment and weed is going to smell. What we really need is some clue about what's inside."

Scientists in Tasmania are reported to be planning DNA tests on their mysterious lump. Mr Crimmen reckons though that this is "rather like doing a DNA test on a corpse before you've checked its pockets". He suggests that the first step is to look for any bones or other skeletal tissue. Although from

its appearance he reckons it has been rotting in the water for "several weeks", even the cartilage of a basking shark will survive, especially the spine - and the picture does seem to show a spine curving away (at the top right).

The most exciting possibility would be if this is the carcass of a plesiosaur, a dinosaur which had a long neck and paddle-like limbs. But to be sure, someone has to poke it with a stick and find some bones. The best efforts in Tasmania haven't turned any up yet.

And in the end it might all turn out not to be an animal at all. "That fibrous matter could mean ... well, we can't rule out that it's not the bole of a mangrove tree," said Mr Crimmen. "But when I showed it to a botanist he didn't recognise it." Clearly, he's in good company.

The end is nigh ... but not for a while

The universe is getting bigger - and nothing is ever going to stop it. It's good news, as long as you don't mind the lights going out 100 billion years from now, says Charles Arthur.

The end is not nigh. According to scientists' latest findings, the universe is going to continue expanding unstoppably in the same way that it began from the Big Bang about 15 billion years ago.

Why? Because there's not

enough mass in creation to stop it.

The finding that the "Big Bang" is not going to be followed by a "Big Crunch", in which the universe reverses itself and starts shrinking again, was reached by five teams of astronomers which each used different techniques to measure the mass of the universe.

The result means, according to Ruth Daly, a Princeton University astronomer, that "it is quite clear now that the universe will expand forever."

This is good news in most respects, though it has to be tempered by one point. In about 100 billion years, entropy will have won its constant battle

with energy and matter, and all the stars will have burnt out: it will be cold and dark. "with nothing left but rocks," said Ms Daly.

If the universe contained sufficient mass, then the force of gravity would eventually slow and then reverse the outward expansion of the boundaries of space and time begun by the Big Bang - much like a ball rolling up the sides, but in time falls downwards again. Some scientists have theorised that the universe could have gone through endless cycles of "bangs" and "crunches".

For years, astronomers have argued over this point, which in

their terminology, is whether the universe is "closed", and so will crunch, or "open" and will always expand. (A third possibility exists: that it is perfectly balanced between both states. But the chances of that would be like flipping a colossal coin and having it land on a razor-sharp edge.)

The study teams were based at Princeton, Yale, the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and the Harvard-Smithsonian Astrophysics Institute, and reported their findings to the American Astronomical Society meeting.

Neta Bahcall, working with a second Princeton team, said her studies of the largest struc-

tures in the universe - immense clusters of hundreds of galaxies, each with billions of stars - show the universe is too lightweight ever to "crunch": "it has only about 30 percent of the mass needed to close," she said.

Peter Garnavich of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, Saul Perlmutter of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and Bradley Schaefer of Yale studied supernovae, which are exploding stars, to measure the rate of expansion of the universe.

By looking very, very deep into the universe, the astronomers were able to measure the rate of expansion early

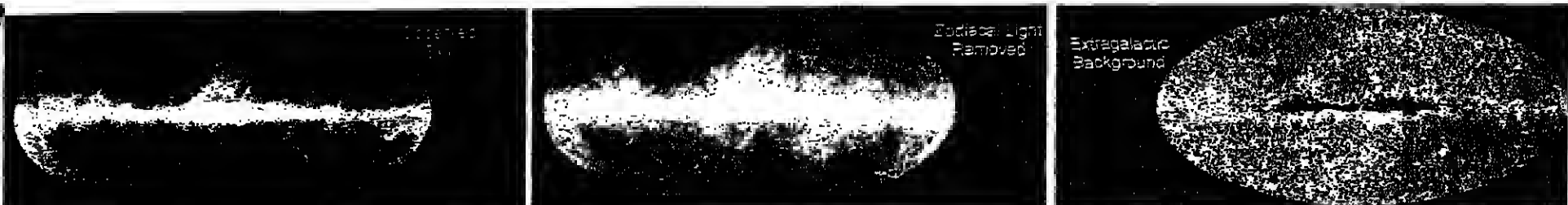
in the history of the cosmos.

Speed of the expansion over time is essential for estimating the density of matter in the universe and, thus, determining if the expansion will continue. Mr Garnavich said his team is at least 95 percent certain now that the "the density of matter is insufficient to halt the expansion of the universe."

Some of the supernovae studied by the astronomers are the farthest stellar explosions ever sighted.

Ms Daly used still another system, measuring the distance and motion of radio "hot spots", intense sources of natural radio signals that are emitted from very hot stars.

A warm glow from the universe's distant past



Ancient heat: Images obtained by the COBE satellite showing the background infrared radiation. The right picture represents heat left over from the early days of creation Photograph: Nasa

The entire night sky is actually awash in infrared light, some of which was emitted when the universe was just one billion years old - a time when the first stars and galaxies began to light up an otherwise dark cosmos.

The latest finding, from the Cosmic Background Explorer (COBE) satellite, "represents a really exciting era in the histo-

ry of the universe," said Eli Dwek of Nasa. The results were presented yesterday to the American Astronomical Society in Washington.

The picture on the left, above, shows the total intensity of infrared light in every direction in the sky - a total of some two billion individual measurements. The middle pic-

ture shows it after subtracting the "local" effects of light scattered from debris in the Solar System. The right picture shows what's left after subtracting the glow of the Milky Way galaxy.

What is left appears as a nearly uniform background "glow" of infrared radiation. The researchers compared the task to listening for a quiet back-

ground hum in a noisy shopping mall.

Astronomers say the findings will help explain how the first stars and galaxies formed after the Big Bang, the colossal explosion which marked the beginning of the universe some 15 billion years ago. Though the initial Big Bang fireball was unimaginably bright, it eventu-

ally faded to black as the visible light gave way to invisible infrared rays.

The COBE result "is telling us about the first activity that occurred [in the early universe] - what I would call the end of the dark age," said Sir Martin Rees, a Cambridge astrophysicist and the current Astronomer Royal. "This is an important clue to

when the first stars formed, and how many stars formed before the galaxies we observe were actually assembled.

Eli Dwek added: "For the first time, we've detected a significant fraction of all the light that was emitted by all the stars over the entire history of the universe."

— Dan Falk, Washington

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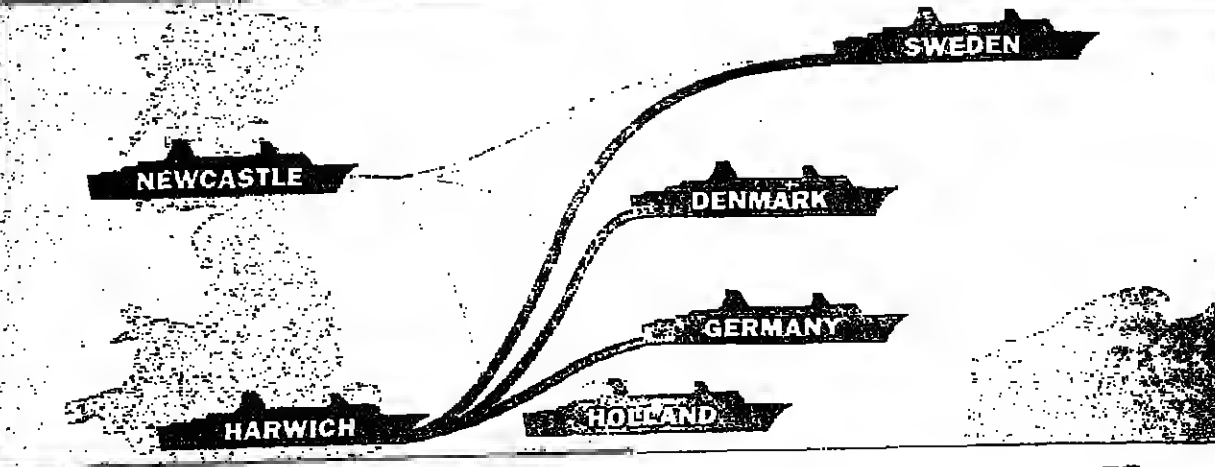
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He's clever, but has the man in the Foreign Office got a heart?

Robin Cook is back in the headlines. Stories about his private life have resurfaced, just as he takes on the task of running the presidency of the European Union for six months. Our correspondent assesses the Foreign Secretary's record in office so far.

He has just completed eight high-profile months in office. His six months in the European limelight are just getting under way. And he has now made plain that he does not seek to return to Scotland to bid for the top job there. In short: Robin Cook looks set to be Foreign Secretary for the long haul. So far, the bouquets and the brickbats have landed in almost equal abundance. The next six months will make it clear whether he will come to be admired or reviled in greater measure.

Once upon a time, it did not very much matter which European Union country was in the presidential hot seat. Things progressed much as they had always done. Now, however, the rotating presidency of this huge and powerful club carries real weight. Britain will certainly be judged on its per-

formance in keeping the EU show on the road until the end of June. It now has a six-month tilt at glory - and Mr Cook, for better or worse, will be leading the charge.

He starts the year off with reasonable omens, after a curate's egg of 1997. Most notable on the debit side was the diplomatic disaster of the row with India after his off-the-cuff comments on Kashmir, just ahead of a visit by the Queen.

But even on ethical issues, which should be Mr Cook's strongest suit, the record remains unclear. In Nigeria, the threat of tougher action against the regime is constantly dangled, but never quite becomes real. In Indonesia, too, the jury is out. Mr Cook's visit there in September was intended to provide the flagship of his ethical policy. But Mr Cook did not want to push things too far.

A meeting between Mr Cook and the trade unionist, Mochtar Pakpahan - who faces a prison sentence because of his public criticism of President Suharto - was called off at the last moment. According to various official versions, this was either (a) because of a court appearance by Mr Pakpahan (which was over by the time Mr Cook arrived) or (b) because of lack of time or (c) because of Mr Pakpahan's illness or (d) why are you still asking questions, when we've already given you a clear answer? All that can confidently be said is that, when I visited Mr Pakpahan in his guarded hospital room on the first evening of Mr Cook's visit, he was excitedly expecting the meeting the next day. Indonesian officials later made plain they regarded a meeting with the loathed Mr Pakpahan as a snub too far.

None of which may be the end of the world. Every politician is forced to make compromises. The contradictions only arise if the public propaganda insists that the government is a compromise-free zone. This week came the latest compromise-that-wasn't: the leading former Chinese dissident, Wei Jingsheng, now based in the United States, was unable to meet the Foreign Secretary, who was said to be too busy. Officials insist that there is absolutely no connection between this lack of time and the undeniable fact that China would go gently berserk if Mr Cook, who visits Peking later this month, were to meet Mr Wei.

In reality, the connection is clear: if Britain was determined to send a strong signal of support, then even a two-minute photo-opportunity with Mr Cook would suffice. Mr Cook sometimes still gives the impression that he regards even lightly implied criticism as demonstrating hostile intent. Admittedly, the photographers' long lenses which (together with a phone-call from Alastair Campbell, the Downing Street press secretary) helped trigger the end of his marriage have meant that he is understandably not fond of the media. His wife has now rubbed public salt in the marital wounds, claiming that the affair with his secretary Gaynor Regan was not his first, and noting that it is "selfish that men should expect it all".

None the less, Mr Cook's prickliness precludes his domestic dramas. When an interviewer on BBC Radio Four's *Today* asked an innocuous question about the tightrope act of support for commerce vs ethical policies, Mr Cook dismissed the question as "facile". When a Channel Four News interviewer raised doubts about policy on Nigeria, Mr Cook's crushing response suggested that he regarded the question itself as illegitimate. Making the questioner look foolish sometimes seems more important to him than persuading people to accept his point of view.

(One almost feels obliged to insert an explanatory footnote: Dear Foreign Secretary, yes I do support the idea of an ethical foreign policy. But I hope it is permissible to raise what seem to be important questions, without being regarded as a Malicious Moron. Apologies in advance, yours etc.)

To be fair, there are indications that Mr Cook's prickliness (which is evenly spread; anybody who has ever asked a sensitive question has received a tetchy answer) is directed especially towards journalists, who many would regard as fair game. But if Mr Cook were to combine his characteristic impatience with the traditional British hauteur on European issues in the next six months, the results could be lethal. One of the reasons that Margaret Thatcher got so little out of Europe was because she never understood that there may be more than one way of looking at things. Europeans do not like being lectured by the least enthusiastic member of the EU team on how they should improve their game - a lesson that Britain has still not fully understood.

For the moment, things have got off to a not-bad start. Britain - at the prompting of Germany, though that bit got lost somewhere along the way - is keen for the EU to take an initiative to stem the horrors in Algeria. That is a good thing - if only in the sense that any initiative is better than none. This time (in sharp contrast to the



Foreign affairs: Robin Cook with his secretary and lover, Gaynor Regan

Photograph: Dave Benett

beginning of the wars of Yugoslavia, with absurd talk of "The Hour of Europe"), nobody thinks Europe has a neat, off-the-peg solution. Greater modesty is in order.

The change in tone towards an ethical foreign policy could still bear fruit - on a drip-drip basis, not necessarily with spectacular fireworks.

Admittedly, some in the Foreign Office remain sceptical. "Pragmatism" is a word that diplomats are very attached to. But Mr Cook is responsible for his own hesitations, too: it's not just a Yes, Minister culture. He

still seems reluctant to admit that there are hesitations.

Meanwhile, paradoxically, there is little boasting about the small indications that things really have changed, beyond the soundbite rhetoric. Thus, for example, Mr Cook has upgraded diplomats' regular consultations and training sessions with human rights groups - in what many at the Amnesty International regard as clear evidence of a change in attitude. And yet, the Foreign Office is deeply reluctant to discuss those sessions, as though they were

faintly shameful. Support given by Britain to democratic media, for example in Serbia and in Nigeria, has been almost equally discreet.

All of which matters. Everybody agrees that Mr Cook is enormously clever. On the question of whether he also has a heart, opinions are divided. If he proves better at point-scoring than dialogue, few of his European colleagues will be impressed. But if it turns out that he has a heart as well as a brain, then both Britain and Europe could stand to benefit.

His wife decides to put things straight

The estranged wife of Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, has alleged that he had several affairs during their marriage. She has also said that she knew about his relationship with his secretary, for whom he left her. Andrew Duncombe reports

When the Foreign Secretary announced last year he was leaving his wife for his secretary, Gaynor Regan, Margaret Cook was the epitome of dignified reserve. She even blamed the break-up on Tory NHS cuts and praised her husband's political skills.

But Mrs Cook appears to have decided it is time to put some things straight. In a forthcoming book she claims Ms Regan was not the first woman with whom her husband had had an affair.

In the book, *Westminster Women*, by Linda McDougall, wife of the Labour MP Austin Mitchell, Mrs Cook claims that she and her husband stayed together despite him having several affairs. She claims she also knew about the affair with his secretary.

Yesterday, as some sections of the media launched a search for these alleged other women, Mr Cook was having a "normal working day".

A Foreign Office spokesman said: "Mr Cook said all he had to say about the break-up of his marriage last August. He is getting on with the hard work required by his busy job as Foreign Secretary and building a new private life."

Mr Cook took the decision to leave his wife when he learnt that a Sunday newspaper was about to reveal details of his affair. In the forthcoming book Mrs Cook reveals that her husband was informed of this by Tony Blair's press secretary, Alastair Campbell, who rang the Foreign Secretary as the Cooks were on their way to Heathrow Airport for a riding holiday in Montana.

Mr Cook informed his wife that their marriage was over in a VIP room at Terminal 4, Heathrow. Mr Campbell yesterday denied he had told Mr Cook that he had to stay in Britain.

Mrs Cook, 52, a consultant haematologist, yesterday said through her lawyers: "The stories in today's press relate to things which were said ... at the time of my marriage break-up. No recent statement has been made by me."

"As I said at the time of the break-up, my husband has always been a first-rate parliamentarian and as expected he has proved to be a highly distinguished Foreign Secretary. Other matters are no concern of the public ... Robin and I now lead separate lives and I would request that we are allowed to get on with our respective jobs in peace."

Mrs Cook, who has two children, also claims Tony Blair sent her a letter in which he said that he and his wife, Cherie, were sad about the pressures she faced, but omitted to say he was sorry that the marriage was over.

On a television programme, a tie-in to the book and also called *Westminster Women*, to be shown this Sunday, Mrs Cook says: "I think women are emotionally much more mature than men. I also think that they don't regress either when they reach a certain age."

Dissident fears Cook puts business before ethics

Wei Jingsheng, China's leading dissident until his departure for the United States last year, had hoped for a meeting with Robin Cook during his visit to London this week. But the Foreign Secretary was too busy - at least until he is safely back from China. Steve Crawshaw talked to a man who is looking for more signs of change from Western leaders.

"Of course I want to return to China. The government would not let me do so now. But I think that change will come soon. People in China feel that they have had enough."

Wei Jingsheng is more optimistic than many about the prospects for change in China. Some argue that most Chinese people are now more interested in business and making ends meet than in politics. But he insists that "90 per cent" seek change. "Everybody is adversely affected by politics - even millionaires."



Wei: Democracy and human rights ensure stability

The 47-year-old Mr Wei - a guest in this country of Amnesty International - has been known as China's Nelson Mandela. Like Mr Mandela, he seemed destined to spend almost his entire life in jail. He was jailed in 1979 for criticising the then Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping - and released in 1993 just a few months before his full 15-year

sentence was up. After just two years at liberty, he was again in 1995 jailed for 14 years on charges of subversion.

He suffered both physical and mental torture. But his worst moments were worrying about his family. "I knew that my family and friends could be in trouble by association. I worried about that an awful lot."

In November last year he was freed on "medical parole". He suffers from high blood pressure and a heart condition. His release came just a few weeks after a meeting between the Chinese President Jiang Zemin and President Bill Clinton in Washington. US officials had made it clear a return visit by Mr Clinton would be difficult if Mr Wei was still in jail.

Mr Wei had requested a meeting with Robin Cook, but Mr Cook's office said it was not possible to fit this in. Mr Cook is due to visit Peking later this month, and is hoping for high-level meetings with Chinese government leaders. A meeting with Mr Wei would have jeopardised those meetings, though British officials insist that the time factor (the meeting was originally requested before Christmas) was the only reason a meeting cannot take place now. Mr Wei was scathing about what he sees as the West's continued failure to press China hard on human rights. He linked the non-meeting with Mr Cook to politics. "Because of business, they want to keep a distance from me. I think it's a pity."

Foreign Office minister Derek Fatchett will meet Mr

Wei on Monday; a meeting with Mr Cook is likely to take place at a later date. Mr Wei called for a strong stance by Mr Cook when he goes to Peking this month: "Western countries talk about the democratic movement. But in real terms they don't give it enough support."

Mr Wei, a former electrician at Peking Zoo, was arrested in 1979 for "counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement", a reference to his advocacy of peaceful political change. He was denounced by Deng Xiaoping, and responded by writing an article entitled "Democracy or new Autocracy?" which directly criticised Deng himself, and was pasted up on Peking's Democracy Wall. Mr Wei argued that all China's economic progress would be meaningless without democracy and human rights.

It is a view that he still holds strongly today: "The economic crisis has some impact in China. It has an impact on people's livelihoods. But more important is the political aspect. People said you don't need human rights and democracy - that you can be prosperous without a democratic system. But democracy and human rights ensure stability."

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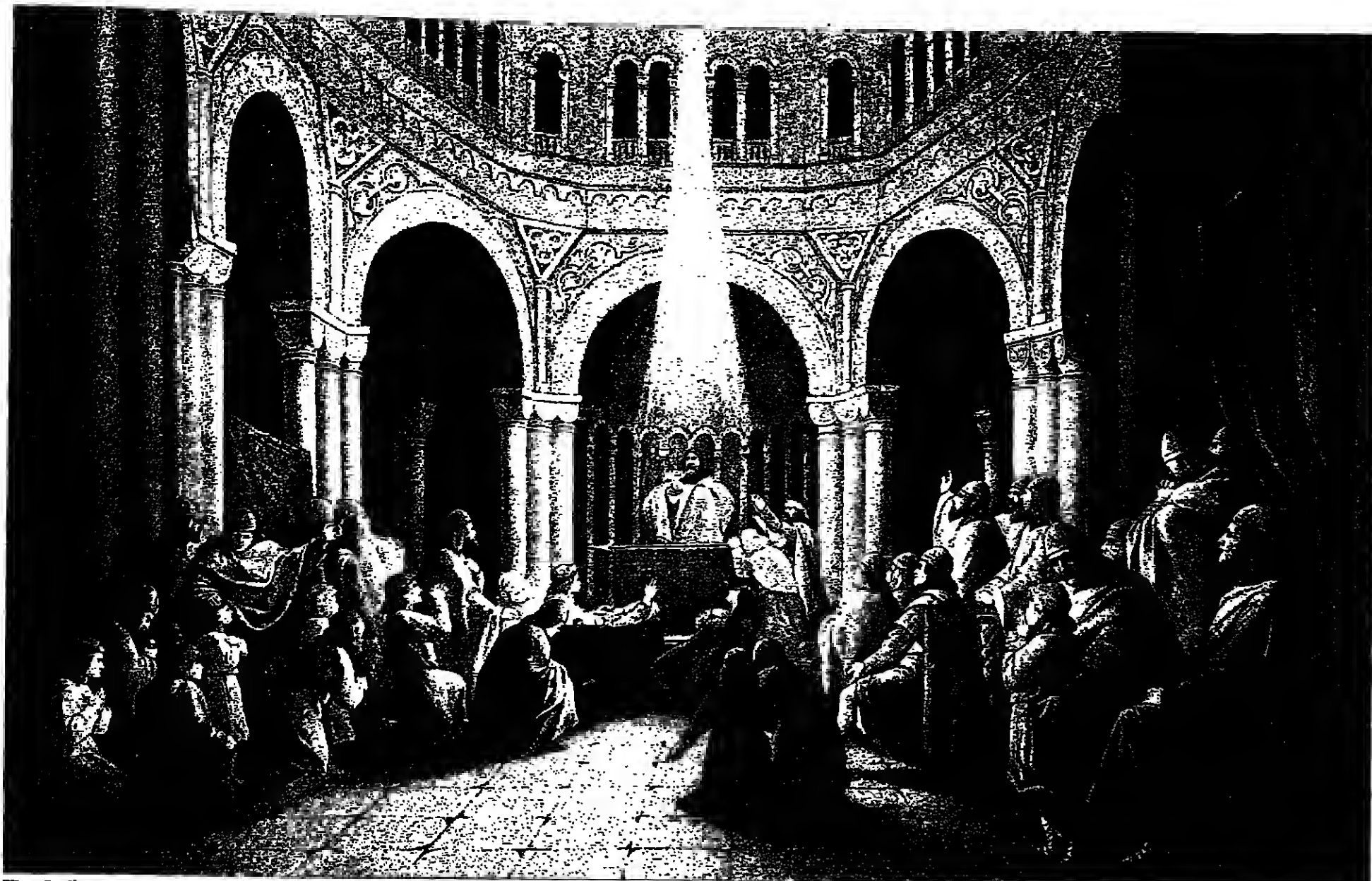
REVIEWED BY



ROBERT HANLEY

صحنه من الامم

His wife
decides to
put things
straight



The Grail shines with a soft purple radiance: final scene from the 1882 premiere of 'Parsifal', as captured in a lithograph by C. Ritter after a photograph by J. Albert. AKG London

There are 499 stories in the ever expanding world of opera. This has been one of them...

The world's first opera – Peri's 'La Dafne' – made its debut 400 years ago this month. Since then the number of titles has grown well into the thousands. Antony Peattie, co-editor of 'Kobbe', the opera-goers' bible, explains how, for the latest edition, he and Lord Harewood narrowed the choice down to just 499.

Gustave Kobbe's *The Complete Opera Book* was first published in America in 1919, the year after its author had been killed in a freak boating accident off Long Island. It was never, can never be, "complete", since choices have to be made. Even with extra entries added by Ferruccio Bonavia, the original edition still covered only 110 operas in detail.

Since 1954, *Kobbe* has been through three revisions under the editorship of Lord Harewood, former managing director (later chairman) of English National Opera and founder of *Opera* magazine. His last (1987) edition covered over 300 operas. The latest edition, co-edited by Lord Harewood and myself, drops the word "complete" – it's now renamed *The New Kobbe's Opera Book* – but covers 499 titles. It

omits rather more, of course, including some 50 by Vivaldi, 60 by Alessandro Scarlatti... Further omissions will irritate those with a copyright axe to grind ("What, no Respighi?"), cultists and excessively broadminded bien-pensants. You can have hours of fun going "Isk, isk".

Kobbe's own style was marked by conviction: he believed in his choices and did not hesitate to enliven plot summaries with personal reminiscences of performances: "I was a boy when, more than 40 years ago, I first heard *Fidelio* in Wiesbaden. But I still remember the thrill, when that trumpet call split the air with the message that the Minister of State was in sight and that Leonore had saved her husband."

On the other hand, when the Grail is disclosed in Act 1 of Wagner's *Parsifal*, Kobbe claims that it "shines with a soft purple radiance that diffuses itself throughout the hall", having witnessed the opera's premiere staging at the composer's own festival theatre in Bayreuth on 26 July 1882. He assumed that its effects would be reproduced at all subsequent performances.

A native New Yorker, Kobbe's selection was largely dictated by the repertoire of New York's Metropolitan Opera. A fascinating document of its time, *Kobbe* found room for six operas by Meyerbeer and as many by Mascagni. Italian opera domi-

nates the lists, with now generally forgotten works by Zandonai, Leoncavallo, Mascagni and Franchetti. Where now are Erlanger, Bruneau, Févère, Xavier Henry, Napoléon Leroux, Gumbourg, Nessler, Thümler? As for "new" works, where are such novelties as Frederick Shepherd Converse's *Sacrifice*, John Adams' *Hugo's Temple Dancer* or Charles Wakefield Cadman's *Shantchi*? When we looked at contemporary operas, Lord Harewood and I agreed that, to qualify for inclusion, they had to have been given an independent second production, since premieres are so often occasioned by pious, political reasons (eg the composer is Welsh: it's the Columbus quinqucentenary). Like all the best rules, it was there to be broken, and I was relieved when Lord Harewood assured me that he thought consistency "an over-rated virtue".

Of the Mozart operas, *Kobbe* originally featured only *Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *The Magic Flute*. Bonavia added *Die Entführung* (Italianised as *Il Sargento*) under "Recent and Revived Operas" – squeezed between Messager's *Madame Chrysantheme* and Rimsky-Korsakov's *From the Tundra*. *Così fan tutte* scrapes in later still: "The Mozart revival has called attention to this slight but delightful opera". But the courage to make such judgements is unique to *Kobbe*. It still distinguishes it from such heavy-

weight rivals as *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (four volumes, 1992, £550) and *The Viking Dictionary of Opera* (one volume, 1993, £60), which aim at completeness, use many different experts and eschew personal experience of performance.

As the editor of *Kobbe*, Lord Harewood has brought to bear on the entire repertoire his vast, unparalleled experience, gained in senior roles not just at ENO but also at the Royal Opera, the Edinburgh Festival and Opera North. I was brought in after the sudden death in June 1996 of Nicholas John, ENO's dramaturge. He was due to re-edit *Kobbe* and I'm sure it would have been remarkable; he planned to cover Hasse (1699-1783) as well as Graun (1703-1759). Before he died, however, he had completed only three, very long entries. Having attended the same school and university as him, I went on to do much the same sort of job (publications editor at Welsh National Opera). I wish we could have debated *Kobbe* together. I think we might have agreed on one thing at least: because it dares to select from all that is available, *Kobbe* can usefully guide readers towards operas they may have missed.

The performing repertoire in Britain shrinks as decreasing subsidy leaves companies fearful of experiment. Opera North currently leads the field in regularly encouraging its audiences

to try the unfamiliar; it has, over the years, given the British stage premieres of such rarities as Schreker's *Die ferne Klang* and Gerhard's *The Duenna*. Recently I caught the company's new staging of Martinu's *Julietta* on tour in Hull, where it reached a large and enthusiastic audience in a week that also included *Così* and *Aida*.

Covering opera's murky waterfront for *Kobbe* makes one passionate about many comparatively unknown pieces: Lord Harewood and I both now carry torches for a whole range of recorded but rarely staged works – from Schubert's *Fierabras* and Sallinen's *The Horseman* (HL) to Rameau's *Zoroastre* and Strauss's *Günther* (A.P.).

But my time at WNO taught me that, even when it comes to more "standard" repertoire, British audiences increasingly long to get more out of their opera-going than mere passive pleasure: hence the emergence of intelligent programme books. Nicholas John's admirable *Opera Guide* series and pre-performance talks. But, unless you belong to the minority who can read music, reading *about* music often frustrates as much as it enlightens. What was needed, I realised, were taped talks about operas that would tell you about the plot and the music, including extracts from recordings. The same thought had occurred to Katie Tearle, head of Glyndebourne

Education, and (thanks to sponsorship from the Vivien Duffield Foundation) we have now made 15 *Opera Bites* cassettes, covering four operas by Handel, four by Janacek, six by Britten, and two each by Rossini, Mozart, Rameau, Martinu, Strauss, Berg and Verdi. All the works are being, or will be, staged in Britain – except for Rameau's masterpiece *Hippolyte et Aricie*, the obvious "B-side" (hint, hint) to *Placide*. To write the scripts we asked experts who could communicate their enthusiasm, such as John Tyrrell, Richard Osborne, Michael Kennedy and Jonathan Keates. As a result, you can now stick one in your car stereo on the way to the theatre and hear how Janacek was inspired by *Madama Butterfly* in *Katya Kabanova*; how Rossini used an 18th-century ballad tune to portray Count Ory; how Handel turns a chorus into a congregation in *Theodora*; how Britten ransacks American popular idioms in *Paul Bunyan* and so on. The readers include Fiona Shaw, Eleanor Bron, Timothy West and Kathryn Harries. We called them *Opera Bites* to emphasise that they are accessible. Our greatest challenge will come next year, when we try to make *Opera Bites* for works that have not yet been performed... The 'New Kobbe's Opera Book' is published by Everyman Press at £45. 'Opera Bites' are available at £6 (incl p&p) from 0118 978 9303

Tumbling, flying, twirling with ease

Cirque du Soleil
Royal Albert Hall, London

Cirque du Soleil's latest show, *Alegria*, by Andrew Watson is another masterly blend of circus skills and baroque imaginings. At the centre of the Albert Hall, the cross-section of a skeletal dome lurks amid a web of rigging and provides a peculiar world inhabited by punky, commedia dell'arte-style figures in beaky masks and lumpy padded pantaloons. These characters play host to a succession of clowning and circus acts which spin the evening out to a slightly over-generous two and a half hours.

The first act's highlight was a fast-track tumbling display by 15 golden figures in fishnet shorts. A sunken trampoline gave anti-gravitational *ballon* to the familiar moves and enabled the gymnasts to fly and twirl as if being tossed by the expert wrist of a juggler. I find it hard to count revolutions unless I have a weasel voice in my ear telling me that someone just fluffed the landing on their piked Tsukahara, but I swear I saw a quintuple back somersault.

These moments of wonder are proudly punctuated by the endless whimsical doings of rude mechanicals. As someone who didn't even think Oleg Popov was funny, I'm probably beyond help, but the audience certainly found the clowning amusing enough.

The second half was stronger than the first. Featured acts included the Russian Bars – handy poles suspended on strong men's shoulders while acrobats somersault fearlessly from one to the other. The low point (for me at least) was a matched pair of Mongolian contortionists. There is something faintly ludicrous about women

folding themselves in half the wrong way – I keep expecting them to start firing ping-pong balls. This is not to say that they didn't perform miracles of balance while turning themselves inside out, or that their unique talents hadn't been deployed with great style and originality by Debra Brown. I just feel that a young girl's ability to bend her back so tightly that she can stand on her own shoulders is less a matter for applause than commiseration.

The erection of a safety net (in a staggering 60 seconds flat) confirmed that they had been saving the really good stuff for the second act. The net was required for the Flying Lev act, in which fearless men hurl themselves from the top of the rig into the safe hands of the two catchers swinging on the trapeze below. Trapeze acts used to be corny but these eight Russians staged the sort of spectacle you'd book for the wedding of an emperor.

The solo highlight of the second half was Paul Bowler, who manhandles a giant steel cube in an act devised by Mikhail Matorin. Bowler, a former Olympic gymnast, has the shorn good looks and god-like physique of *Barbarella*'s angel and spins and plays with the shining cube like Atlas shouldering the globe. There is a strange, Olympian quality to this stylish take on the familiar sight of the juggler dwarfed by his prop. The slow strength and awesome beauty of this act was ill-served by a thumping Euro anthem. Bowler's communion with the cube was worth the price of admission on its own but I would have preferred to worship in silence.

To 8 Feb (booking: 0171-589 8212)

Louise Levene



ALAN THOMAS

THE WEEK ON RADIO

REVIEWED BY



ROBERT HANKS

A conviction runs deep at the BBC that live and spontaneous broadcasting has a special magic that the listeners really appreciate. Contrasting the groping for coherence and blundering into cliché that too often characterises the live and spontaneous *Kaleidoscope* with the sharper, better-formed opinions that marked it out in its old, pre-recorded days, you may suspect that there's a confusion going on here between creative tension and acute anxiety.

All the same, there's something quite sweet about a vast, unlubricated dinosaur like the BBC maintaining its faith in the warm-blooded and the agile. If nothing else, it has given an opening to Frank Delaney, who has been put out of action by illness over the last couple of years. Now he's bounced back with *Revealed Lives* (Radio 4,

Monday-Friday), a series of extemporised biographies of figures he admires, from Beatrix Potter to Julian of Norwich.

Delaney's model is a series of unscripted talks by Eve Ruggieri, heard on French radio 10 years ago. In her case, according to the publicity material put out by Radio 4, "as the tension built, so did the audience". Presumably there was some hope that this would happen with Delaney. In fact, the talks have been almost entirely devoid of tension, thanks to Delaney's quite astonishing fluency. You get the odd misplaced emphasis, a few redundant sentences here and there; but really, Delaney is so polished that a bit of gentle scuffling is all to the good. As far as content goes, it's nothing remarkable; but as a display of sheer verbal virtuosity, it's pretty astonishing.

Talking of Dame Julian of Norwich, the 14th-century anchoress, she is what Radio 3's talent for self-publicity makes Paula Yates look like. Let's rephrase that: considering the tiny number of people who are remotely interested in Radio 3, the amount of newsprint it contrives to generate is quite enormous. This week it has outdone itself, with major broadsheet

coverage for *Centurions*, the series that profiles the 100 most influential artists of the 20th century. Column yards have been devoted to dissecting the (admittedly inconsistent and implausible) list – a magnificent achievement given that the series goes out at teatime on a Sunday afternoon and is judged by the first programme, really quite dull. Apart from anything else, this profile of Kafka never touched on the most influential aspect of his work: the fatalistic sensibility we call Kafkaesque, with its grim sense of life beamed in by incomprehensible rules, arbitrary destiny and self-serving authority colluding to beat us down.

You can overestimate his influence, though. Nicholas Monsarrat's *The Cruel Sea*, Radio 2's new drama serial on Wednesday evenings, is one of those wartime yarns that celebrate the hemmed-in life: things may be miserable on board the corvette *Compass Rose*, but obedience and mucking in make life bearable. There are some silly, stagey moments in Jonathan Ruffell's production, but it's hard not to feel some primitive stirrings in response to this hymn to comradeship and doing your duty. So much for Kafka.

A WEEK IN THE ARTS

DAVID LISTER

John Tusa, the increasingly omnivorous head of the Barbican Centre, ended last year claiming that arts journalists were insufficiently supportive. "Where side are you on?" he demanded. Well, that depends on how many tickets you want to give me for the Barbican concert by Sonny Rollins, John. Oups, I mean:

"The side of objectivity and fair reporting."

Mr Tusa has begun this year spicing the combativeness with a touch of intrigue. Speaking on Radio 3's *Music Matters* programme, he said the real problem with arts reporting is that the journalists don't understand the complexities of the money side. As opposed, presumably, to those whizz-kid arts administrators who keep running up multi-million pound deficits.

He then hinted darkly that there is currently a financial scandal that has not been rumoured. All is well, though. I'm

sure, Mr Tusa, as a former distinguished journalist and now one of the great and good in the arts, would never stand idly by if there were impropriety. He will reveal all, no doubt.

Until he does, I shall assume he is referring to the Millennium Dome costing £750m, minus the cost of Mr Mandelson's entry ticket to Walt Disney World, so make that £748m (allowing for his hotel bills). With the New Millennium Experience company visibly floundering on what to put in the Dome, this column will take a regular look at the arts companies and venues threatened with extinction for a fraction of the Dome money.

At present, we have theatres such as Greenwich and the Gate on the list. Next week, the Arts Council's annual grants (and consequent cuts) are announced and the list will grow considerably longer. Whose side are you on, Mr Mandelson?

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THE INDEPENDENT

INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

ART 98

Eternity is an ever-expanding idea. And so is that Dome



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If it is portents of the millennium you want, how about Patrick Moore's Sussex observatory being torn apart by a tornado? Only last week the celebrity stargazer said he expected UFO-watchers to be working overtime as the end of the century drew near. "The millennium will send them all bonkers," he said. That will teach him to be sceptical. It will be frogs and boils next. Followed by the flying saucers themselves.

Luckily, we have scientists on hand to explain that tornadoes are surprisingly common in Britain. It is just that they hardly ever hit houses. A layer of stable cold air, a low-lying mass of warm air, a thunderstorm and - whoosh! It spins, touches the ground, and causes havoc. This visitation has nothing to do with judgment-day, the wrong kind of offering or extra-terrestrial visitors. At least not mechanically, anyway.

Same with earthquakes, plagues, floods or eclipses. Imagine what would happen in Cornwall at 12.10pm on 11 August 1999, when it goes dark for two minutes. If we had not been told in advance that there was going to be a total eclipse of the sun. Just three months before the calendar flicked over to a very round number, it could have caused millennial mayhem.

Since the last millennium, science has

replaced religion as the body of knowledge that explains the world. Scientists are now the explainers, predictors and magicians of our society, and they are a more democratic priesthood than the ones they replace. The increasingly esoteric specialisation of their research has been balanced by the huge expansion of the business of popularising science. Science is popular, and popular science is a growth sector in publishing and journalism.

Yet the millennium itself remains the point at which religion meets arithmetic, which could be regarded as the start of science. Paradoxically, they got the arithmetic more right the first time round. The first millennium was regarded as running up to the end of the year 1000, whereas the second millennium is going to be a year short, ending by common usage on 31 December 1999. This is an indicator of the decline of religious ritual, because if people really wanted to mark the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ, they would want to get the date right.

But most people know that no one really knows when exactly Jesus was born, and that we will essentially be commemorating a number - a number that owes its origin to our Christian heritage but which has a wider meaning.



The Christian heritage causes trouble nonetheless. The Bishop of Oxford has renewed the churches' call for a "spiritual" content for the millennium celebrations. And this week the representatives of various other faiths demanded to be let into the Dome too.

Then, inevitably, the atheists wanted a look-in. But frivolous demands from the National Secular Society for an "Inquisition Pavilion", a "Witch Burning Experience" and a history of the Crusades "including Muslim heads impaled on spears" are hardly designed to promote tolerance and mutual understanding.

While the spokesmen of organised religion (and organised irreligion) seem to emphasise differences between people and to look backwards, it is scientists who are striving to unite our explanations of everything and to look to the future.

The real millennial story of the week, then, was the report in today's newspaper that astronomers have concluded that the universe will expand for ever. After our civilisation's first two millennia, we have another 100 million to look forward to. After that, give or take an aeon or two, all the energy in the universe will eventually dissipate and leave it a cold, dark, empty place "with nothing left but rocks". So do not cancel the milk, yet.

The ever-expanding universe is an important conclusion, but does it mean anything practical to the majority of us who would not know a black hole from a mint with the same? The simple answer is, no. It seems that there is not enough stuff in the universe to exert the gravitational pull

that would reverse its expansion, and cause a "big crunch" to mirror the "big bang" of 15 billion years ago. So it will go on and on expanding, although because space and time get a bit bent at the edges (this is where scientists start to run out of language and brainpower to explain and imagine) there is never anything beyond it into which it expands. And, even if the universe were "closed", the big crunch would be an unimaginable time coming.

The fact that the universe is "open" hardly seems a subject on which a newspaper can have an opinion. We could hardly declare that the universe has expanded, is expanding and ought to be diminished.

But it does matter that the universe is, and always will be, flying apart. It shapes how humanity sees itself. Scientists conduct conversations and arguments at the boundaries of human knowledge, and the metaphors and way of understanding that they employ enter the common consciousness. Big bang, quantum leap, light year. The "open" universe brings us face to face with eternity. When the world did not end in 1001, there was ushered in one of the greatest periods of church-building in Europe's history. If only our growing understanding of the awesome mysteries of the universe would inspire a similar optimism in two years' time.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tories and Europe

Sir: As someone who has worked all my adult life in a great industry (agriculture) now being destroyed by an overvalued currency and high interest rates, I find the response of the current Tory leadership to the EMU debate completely incomprehensible. I also find the Labour Chancellor Gordon Brown's caution on the issue irritating.

Can Hague, Howard *et al* not see that to have a single market totally free of tariff controls, which they say they support, and 15 fluctuating currencies within it is a recipe for disaster? It is simply a charter for those countries with weak currencies to undercut their neighbours with stronger ones at will. It is remarkable how quickly this situation can bring multi-billion pound industries like farming to their knees. It is no way to build a healthy, modern economy in the global marketplace.

The UK benefited mightily from devaluation in 1992, but now the boot is on the other foot and it hurts. Why do we need this economic roller-coaster ride when we can have stability?

A number of Mr Hague's current and past colleagues obviously see this, as we were reminded by their recent letter (5 January). How much more damage to British industry will it take before Mr Hague accepts the all-too-obvious logic of the Single Currency? It will not do to fall back on the argument of the ERM debacle, since that mechanism had the one great weakness that EMU will not have - attempted currency stability achieved by market intervention, which proved ineffective.

The UK rural economy in particular depends on exports. At the moment we are dying for the lack of those exports. What good is Mr Hague's precious national sovereignty of keeping the pound, if large areas of the nation are laid economically waste? Let us have currency stability and lower interest rates before it's too late.

JAMES GIBSON-WATT
Hay-on-Wye

Sir: M J Knight (letter, 7 January) has a strange view of recent political history if he believes that the last general election was a vote against the "Patrician Tendency", a strand of Toryism which has always, no doubt motivated by a sense of noblesse oblige, been of the One Nation variety.

No, it was a vote against the Tory Party itself, which for at least ten years before had been dominated by those dogmatic, uncaring apostles of unbridled self-interest, the "Parvenu Tendency", whose doctrine is best summed up by that infamous remark of the shopkeeper's daughter: "There is no such thing as society." and who now are both characterised and led by William Hague.

JOHN DAVIS
Bookham, Surrey

Plans for 'Britannia'

Sir: I do not think it particularly helpful to conduct a debate in the letter pages of newspapers about *Britannia* while I and my officials are engaged in continuing dialogues with those who made bids. Nonetheless I must correct some comments about the Manchester bid in your article "*Britannia* plans may be scuppered" (9 January).

The Manchester bid was not late. Whilst Manchester was not among those who had expressed an early interest to government, their proposal was submitted on 29 September, the same day as the updated proposals of the Clyde Heritage Trust and a day before the updated proposals of Lords of the Isles for Canary Wharf in London.

Nor was inclusion of Manchester imposed upon officials. After initial scrutiny it was clear it had substance; it would have been irresponsible to reject it out of hand at that stage if we wanted the best solution for *Britannia*. None of the bids on the table were perfect. All needed more scrutiny and development. Most were developed further after the end of September. On 17 October all proposers were told by letter that government would assess the Manchester proposals alongside those previously shortlisted. None raised objections.

Many precedents show how difficult and costly it is to preserve historic ships such as *Britannia*. The process in which we are still engaged is not the letting of a competitive contract but an attempt to find the best possible arrangements for securing the future of this piece of national heritage. That is why I announced in December that we are now concentrating on just two proposals, from Edinburgh and Manchester. I remain more than happy to address whatever concerns any of the consortia involved wish to raise with me.

GEORGE ROBERTSON
Secretary of State for Defence
Ministry of Defence
London SW1

Squalid public

Sir: Polly Toynbee (1 January) has revived the debate about private affluence and public squalor, citing London Underground as an example. Increased government expenditure, we were told, would make travel more pleasant. If only life were that simple.

The network recently introduced some attractive new trains, and of course we could do with more. But greater public expenditure does not compel drivers to turn up for work. Nor does it prevent passengers from scattering the new upholstery and floors with litter, spraying the exteriors with graffiti, causing noise pollution with mobile phones, and travelling in clothes scruffy enough for a Communist republic.

Public squalor is as much a matter of private choices as of public expenditure.

ROLAND PEARSON
Pinxten, Middlesex

LIMITED EDITION • 33 1/3 RPM • THE ROLLING STONES



The sleeve of the bootleg Rolling Stones EP which includes the BBC broadcasts

Bootleg Stones

Sir: David Lister claims that he has heard tracks by the Rolling Stones "unheard outside the BBC for more than 30 years" (report, 7 January). He has not had quite such a unique listening experience as he supposes.

Just over 20 years ago I bought a bootleg EP on the

TMQ (Trademark of Quality) label from a shop in Manchester which includes some of the tracks played to David Lister. As you can see from the sleeve of the record, the tracks are "Cops and Robbers" (recorded on 19 March 1964 and broadcast on 9 May 1964), and three tracks broadcast on the BBC's Saturday Club.

"Memphis Tennessee" and

"Roll over Beethoven" from 5 October 1963 and "Fanny Mae" from 18 September 1963.

The quality of the record is excellent and I'm sure many Stones fans who may not have ever heard these tracks are eagerly looking forward to their official release.

J R B CASHELL
Walsall, West Midlands

Artistic suede shoes

Sir: You may occasionally find it valuable to employ slightly older journalists. The mysterious text "One for the money! Two for the show..." employed by the artist Lawrence Weiner and analysed in critical depth by Judith Palmer ("Forget icebergs, let his escalator take you for a ride", 6 January) is in fact the opening lines of the existentialist masterpiece "Blue Suede Shoes", a song written and recorded by Carl Perkins in 1956.

Please ask Ms Palmer to watch out for my upcoming entry for the Turner Prize, which expresses the eternal torment and surrealist futility of human existence and consists of the phrase "A-Wop-Bop-A-Loo-Bop-A-Lop-Bam-Boom" written in crayon on the back of an old envelope.

DAVID BEBBINGTON
Broadstairs, Kent

Cure for congestion

Sir: Professor Peter Smith (letter, 8 January) is wrong to claim that new types of motive power will cure (or partly cure) congestion. Why should they? We could have completely "clean" metal boxes on wheels; but they'd still impede each other's progress unless and until we find a cure for congestion.

Suggested cures are of two main types: those that rely on the price mechanism and those that don't. The first category includes higher fuel taxes (hitting hardest poor car users in rural areas, who cause little congestion); taxes on non-residential parking space; tolls on motorway use; and congestion charges in cities. All of these are inequitable and possibly ineffective in reducing congestion.

The second category includes the demand management measures used widely in US cities, giving strong incentives for car

pools. These are equitable and have proved acceptable. Why do we not adopt them here?

NIGEL SEYMER
Lower Slough, Gloucestershire

Sir: Hybrid vehicles will never reduce congestion; a hydrogen-powered car is still the same size as a petrol-powered one. No amount of new technology can make a car as efficient or as fast through rush-hour as a bicycle.

CARLTON REID
Editor, *Our Your Bike*
Newcastle upon Tyne

Out to lunch

Sir: My heart goes out to those heroic women who, according to a survey, spend five and a half hours preparing Sunday lunch ("Fats and restaurants break records for Christmas lunch", 7 January).

What is it, exactly, that takes so long to cook? Since five and a half hours is allegedly the average, there are presumably some women who are still preparing lunch at tea-time. In that case, what did their families eat for lunch and who cooked it?

D A POTTS
Oxford

Nanny in the family

Sir: Charlotte Roberts had a live-in nanny looking after her children from 7am to 7.30pm each day, plus two nights a week babysitting ("Nanny on the loose", 8 January). Effectively, she was employing the nanny to raise the children on her behalf, with the tremendous emotional commitment this was bound to involve.

After three years, the nanny became an alcoholic. I sympathise with Charlotte Roberts' difficulties in deciding to get rid of her. What I can't sympathise with is her puzzle-mist over the nanny's desire to keep in touch with the children. Roberts behaves as if the nanny gave nothing, and was expected to give nothing. She probably never regarded the nanny for a moment as someone she would wish to know for the rest of her life, yet she demanded her devotion to the children. Now that this devotion is of no further use, she pretends not to have demanded it.

In the old days, the true contract of the live-in nanny was at least properly understood: the nanny gave up the best of herself to the family she served, and in return remained part of that family, permanently. I'm not suggesting Charlotte Roberts tries this with her dismissed nanny: it's too late, the best she can do is recognise herself as unfit to employ a live-in nanny. As for girls who want to be live-in nannies, there's only one thing to be said to them: don't risk it.

MEREDITH OAKES
London SW16

Millennium doom

Sir: With regard to the Millennium Dome and the future of us all, it is worth noting that the concrete dome over the defunct (but very much alive) nuclear plant at Chernobyl is beginning to break apart ("New fears at Chernobyl", 8 January). According to reports, the cost of a new Chernobyl dome will be £700m - just the sum the Government is spending (officially) on fripperies in Greenwich!

Dr M WILLIS
London NW3

Sir: In answer to John Cancell (letter, 7 January), at the first millennium, there was a panic in which a lot of people sold all that they had and gave the money to the Church.

When Jesus did not return in glory to judge them, they went to the Church to ask for their money back. They did not get it.

JOHN C RUDGE
Hartington, Middlesex

Self's the man

Sir: So "... women work better but men work more successfully" (report, 8 January). In other words, women are altruistic and men are selfish. Could it possibly be true?

C A BENTLEY
Brentwood, Essex

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Virtual pets, virtual boyfriends... but what about virtual celebrities? We had a brisk internal office argument this week about how much *Independent* readers wanted to know about Anthea Turner and her marriage break-up. (The answer turned out to be four centimetres.)

My problem is that I'm not sure I believe in Anthea Turner. Yes, she seems to exist. She appears on the telly and is much photographed for the tabloid press. But that could be a stand-in, or even a hologram.

It is quite clear why all-purpose celebs are required in modern societies. We are constantly talking and reading about the big, simple events of living - birth, sex, bereavement, accidents, the struggle for successful relationships and so on. Once we discussed and observed it all mainly through our friends and relations; now, in a more media-saturated world, it comes also through newspapers and broadcasting. That needs people - personalities - on to whose identities these timeless and eternally interesting questions can be draped. If they are good-looking and appear often enough to give the viewer the illusion that they are ersatz friends, so much the better.

Hence the celebrity business. The trouble is that even the most hard-working celebs must go through long periods when they are not kicking out lovers or husbands, giving birth, losing boyfriends in car accidents, dying out or "speaking frankly for the first time". They are, sadly, just too busy eating, sleeping, walking about the place, going to the car-wash and so on.

One answer is to ensure a constant supply of celebrity, but this is messy, time-consuming and expensive. As competition constantly erodes media budgets, and technology improves, the creation of Virtual Celebs, with faster-changing emotional lives than

living people, is more satisfactory. Hence "Anthea", "Zoe" and "Chris", who clearly pack far more into their lives than real people but are eternally available to be written about.

We already know that Melinda Messenger, for instance, is part-silicone, but that is surely only the start. The great thing about the Virtual Celeb is that he or she can be made to mate, overdose, tantrum and so on to order, providing my trade with the raw material in the handiest possible form. Japanese industrialists developed "just-in-time" manufacturing, where the car door or piece of tubing arrived just when it was wanted in the factory process, and not before. Well, now we can have just-in-time divorce, booze-ups and comings-out. Brilliant. I think we'll call our one Nikki.

Robin Cook's little local difficulties provide another tricky test about what should be left private and what should be published. I wouldn't want a French-style press, where people at the top can live lives greatly at variance from their public image without the slightest risk of exposure. Also, Mrs Cook, who is hurt and was dumped unceremoniously in the interests of New Labour's public face, has a right to talk about the effect of politics on people like her: all this stuff has come from her, remember, not from journalistic digging. That is why I thought it acceptable to report the bare facts, though not in gloating, lip-smacking detail.

But can it really be argued that Mr Cook's love-life has affected his public performance as a Foreign Secretary? Of course not. Has he pontificated about sexual morality? No. People may tut or snigger but, as a public issue, this is all complete nonsense.

Andrew Marr

QUOTE UNQUOTE

As a mercenary once said to me, there's nothing frightening about death. It's the bit before - Frederick Forsyth, *novelist*. I am a grocer's son and you are a grocer's daughter. What problems had you with the price of sage? - Peter Barry, *former Irish foreign minister, recalling an abortive attempt to endear himself to Margaret Thatcher*

This business of being upset when the Speaker doesn't call them is ridiculous. You can't go into Parliament and be some little petal on the benches - Angela Browning, *Conservative MP, on "Blair's Babes"*

A little bit of cancer is making me very human - Rabbi Lionel Blue

I was nowhere near a nervous breakdown. I'm made of sterner stuff and felt murderous but never suicidal - Christine Hamilton on the "cash-for-questions" controversy involving her husband, ex-MP Neil Hamilton

I thought, do I join in or do I retire gracefully? - Tony Slattery, *comedy actor, on finding his fiancée in bed with another woman*

One of the things I hate is people pretending that the theatre is real. That, to me, is psychotic behaviour - Phyllis Nagy, *American playwright*

You have less to do, but then you have fewer people to help you do it - Michael Howard, *former Home Secretary, on life in Opposition*

Not all that comes out of the sea is just a blob of blubber

DAVID
AARONOVITCH
MONSTERS OF
THE MIND

In 1938 the curator of a small South African museum, Miss MC Latimer, was rooting around in a pile of fish brought ashore by a small Cape fishing vessel and found an unusually ugly and hitherto unknown one. In a somewhat tactless compliment, her colleague, a Professor Smith, named this hideous and by now smelly beast *Latimeria chalumnae*. Doubtless Miss Latimer, a scientist, was thrilled.

But the fish was not new. It was, on the contrary, very old. So old that, until Miss Latimer pulled it out from amongst the piscatorial plebeians on the deck of the *Jolly Kaffir*, it had been thought to have been extinct since the Cretaceous period. It was known to palaeontologists as a coelacanth.

True, the discovery of new dinosaurs is an everyday event. Landships in the Rockies, or cliff-falls beside British beaches, continually reveal entirely new types of giant lizard. But they have one disappointing feature in common. They are all dead. Extinct. Not since Miss Latimer's time has something really ancient turned up alive. No mammoths, no sahere-toothed tigers, no aurochs, no plesiosaurs. And please don't write in and tell me about some insect or boring mini-trilobite which has been found by a geologist from Rejkjavik Polytectonic clinging to the underside of a sulphurous rock in northern Iceland. They're not big enough to be interesting.

Then earlier this week there was sudden excitement in the Antipodes. A monster had been washed up on a Tasmanian beach. Five yards long and two yards wide, weighing an estimated four metric tons, it was described by local surfer Ricky Evans as "like a blubbery mass with a few very weird, more defined features, like flipper sort of finery arms. It seemed to have a hairy sort of coating as well."

Theories abounded. It was a prehistoric giant squid, a previously unknown member of the walrus family, an alien from beyond the Milky Way, even drowned Sixties Aus-

tralian premier Harold Holt. Ricky must have been hoping that the dense mass of putrid flesh would be named *Evansia tasmaniae*, and that his moniker would be forever linked with a landmark discovery. "Sea Monster 2: the mystery deepens", was how the *Hobart Mercury* newspaper headlined the story on Thursday morning.

Easy come, easy go. By Friday, a spokesperson for Tasmania's Parks and Wildlife Service, one Jamie Baylark, said a similar fleshy lump found on another local beach had been identified as a bit of old whale blubber. This find was likely to be the same, possibly from the same whale. Spoilsport Baylark explained: "As whale blubber dries, it begins to appear quite fibrous, and once it becomes covered in sand can appear hairy, which may have given some people the impression that the blubber was some kind of animal."

If Mr Baylark is correct, then the story is, of course, much less interesting. For us newspaper folk, "Big lump of whale blubber found on beach," accompanied by a picture, is not much of a pitch. And although I have to say that photographs of what became known as the "Blobster" looked to me exactly like rotting whale blubber covered in sand, others had discerned in this unpleasant shape features so unique that they had become temporarily convinced that a real discovery had been made.

Now we begin to arrive at the point. It isn't surprising that bits of dead whales wash up on beaches. It's amazing that it happens so little. Whales are very large, there are still (despite the Japanese and the Norwegians) a lot of them, and they have not yet mastered the art of burial at sea, or of underwater cremation. So there is a whole lot of dead whale down there.

Almost everything that lives in the sea, dies in the sea. And quite a lot that didn't live there, dies there too. So, if you think about it, the oceans must be full of horrid rotting flesh and carcasses just floating about, carried by unknown streams and eddies. It is one of the many reasons why I, for one, am extremely thankful that evolution impelled mankind's ancestors to move on to dry land, long before I had a chance to be born.

In that case, why is it that the most obvious explanation for the Blobster was specifically rejected by newspapers and others in favour of the monster theory? Well, because we desperately want there to be undiscovered creatures. That's why we have kept alive the myth of Nessie, why Conan Doyle invented the *Lost World* with its pterodactyls and stegosaurs, why *Jurassic Park* was such a hit.

With the world now fully explored, and with little sign yet of life on other planets, Blobsterology satisfies an almost primeval desire for there to be new dangers to discover, hidden here on earth. Suburbanisation leaves many citizens stripped of any excitement greater than that of crossing the road or listening to Richard Littlejohn on Radio 5. But what if there really is a colony of leopards on Bodmin Moor, or a sewer full of escaped crocodiles in Esher, or an overlooked family of Triceratops on Hampstead Heath?

So it's all foolishness then, to be lumped in with alien abduction, the influence of spacemen on ancient civilisation and aromatherapy? Perhaps. But suppose for a moment that 60 years ago a Miss MC Latimer had chucked an ugly old fish back into a South African dock, with the sentiment that it was probably just a rotten flounder. If you don't at least ask and speculate and theorise, then nothing new ever happens.

Hallelujah! At last the Government has seen the light, if not the Beeb

TREVOR
PHILLIPS
ON MUSLIM
EDUCATION

They'll be giving extra thanks to the Almighty in the prayers at your local mosque today. One reason is that David Blunkett, the Education Secretary has seen the light, metaphorically speaking, and decided to accord Muslim parents and children the same rights as those of virtually every other faith community; he has announced that two Muslim schools will benefit from government support provided they meet the requisite educational standards. The other reason is that since there are no Asian players in the professional football game, it is unlikely that they will have to confront the question of what to do with a football commentator who claims that he finds it hard to distinguish between black players.

Astonishingly, John Motson's insult has, so far, gone unpunished by the BBC: so much for the protestations of the Corporation that it really, really wants to embrace Britons of all kinds. Perhaps equally surprisingly, no black player has been asked for his opinion by any of the major news organisations. You can imagine, however, how those who lined up behind the "Kick Racism Out of Football" campaign must be feeling. Ironically, it is Blunkett who is supposed to have impaired vision; but John Motson's unique form of colour blindness serves to highlight just how radical Mr Blunkett's decision is.

Most children do not, and will never go to denominational schools. There are those who regard such places as abominations, preserving the worst cultural and social divisiveness in, for example, Northern Ireland. They often fail to point out that such schools are the most popular in their areas, and that the children themselves feel at ease in them; that it is the way in which relations between schools are handled that may or may not create social conflict; and that the real educational apartheid that exists in Britain today is, as pointed out by Sir Herman



Not everyone wants religious schools for their children, but they want there to be choice Photograph: Asadour Guzelian

Ouseley, all too often between rotting, under-resourced inner city schools with a majority of non-white pupils, and the rest.

For most of us, this is not a personal issue of course. Relatively few families, even those who profess a specific religious faith feel strongly enough to put the fourth "R" - religion - in front of a good grounding in the other three. Good teaching, distance from home, and children's own wishes generally come first. But I believe that most of us want the choice to exist. It is rather like the majority of TV viewers, who spend most of their time watching *Blind Date* and *Friends*, yet insist that the documentaries that they never see are an essential component of the TV they like. Millions of Britons who would never dream of sending their children to denominational schools for religious reasons are content to let the option exist, if only for someone else to take.

Given that such schools are supported by governments of all stamps, the Education Secretary was right not to listen to those who argued against allowing Muslim schools. First, on grounds of fairness: most of the opposition seemed to be motivated by sheer prejudice and fear of Muslims; if the wild generalisations made about Islam had been made about Judaism there would, rightly, have been a storm of protest. I would have been monstrously unfair that one recognised faith was unable to share the right to have

its own schools. Second, it is right that there should be choice in the kind of school available. Every child is individual; should the system not try to recognise that?

Third, it is a vital recognition of diversity. Paradoxically, many progressive multiculturalists will feel uneasy about state recognition of cultural separatism. The orthodoxy is that every school should be thoroughly multicultural in its curriculum and its practice. By that they mean that every school in the country should carry the same lessons with similarly broad-based references that include people and traditions of all kinds.

The reasoning is superficially persuasive: it is often precisely the schools where there is no ethnic or religious diversity among the pupils that need the most attention from this point of view. Thus, children in Brixham are said to need steel bands as much as do those in Brixton. Also, history should not be incomplete; children should know that when the Tudors created the greatest maritime power ever seen, as well as ruling the waves they used their power to perpetrate a genocide we now call the slave trade.

Whether doing this in all its purity is entirely practicable is questionable, but the principle is clear. However, there are things at which I would draw the line: few things are more painful than watching teachers who have no reason ever to speak West Indian patois try-

ing to force children (many of whom, black and white will be more fluent in Jamaican than they are) to accept it as a natural part of their English diet. And all too often, schools, which are by their very nature generalist simply get it wrong: for example, I have very little against steel bands in their place, but for them to become a symbol of Caribbean culture is an embarrassing travesty, which, probably makes most black children cringe rather than feel included.

The real aid to diversity is not to force everyone to accept a watered-down, bowdlerised version of a collection of half-digested cultures; it is for different communities to have their chance to create their own centres of tradition, which exist uncompromised and authentic. That is why the right to have such schools as the ones now backed by the Government is so important: it gives a clear signal that in modern Britain being what you really are is nothing to be afraid of, that we can live with real differences, and that we genuinely embrace the new traditions among us.

Mind you, that's clearly going to be pretty hard to achieve on the football field. So far, in

all the embracing that goes on after a goal, a South Asian player has never been in the huddle. No-one quite seems to know why. It may of course have a lot to do with the behaviour of fans, who haven't fully accepted the disproportionate number of African-Caribbean players. Two years ago my mate (that's what somebody you go to football is called - he can't just be a friend, can he?) and I decided to introduce our younger daughters to the game.

Having bought the most expensive seats in the most expensive stand in the country, we assumed we'd be safe from the usual nonsense; yet no sooner had a black player popped before the words "you lanky-legged black twat" whizzed over our heads. I looked at him, he looked me and he said, feebly "No offence meant, mate". I suppose that's John Motson's defence; he said it but didn't mean it and if you took offence it was because you blacks are all so touchy. Still, if Motson is down to commentate on the World Cup, how will he cope with Nigeria vs Jamaica? Now those guys are really touchy. The Beeb should keep Motson on the bench for his own good and for ours.

The winning and losing ways of Will Carling - rugby's first superstar

CHRIS
HEWETT
ON A BELATED
RETIREMENT

On a grey Twickenham afternoon in March 1996, Will Carling inexplicably tripped over a loose lump of finely manicured turf during a Five Nations international match with Ireland and plummeted to the floor with his ankle ligaments in shreds.

It was not the first time England's most celebrated rugby player had fallen flat on his face on the big occasion, but it was very definitely the cruellest. After eight years as captain of his country, Carling was leaving centre-stage on a stretcher rather than on the shoulders of an adoring public.

A more sanguine, less ego-centric character might have read the runes and called it quits immediately. After all, Carling had already decided to relinquish the captaincy at the end of a debilitating few months during which he had not only engaged in a neurotic game of one-upmanship with Jack Rowell, the equally complex and self-absorbed England coach, but also played fast and loose with the tabloids, who, unsurprisingly, were more than a little exercised by his "close friendship" with the Princess of Wales.

Sadly, Carling the obsessive held sway over Carling the shrewd careerist. He played another season, both for Harlequins and England, without

ever looking like the world-beater he once was, and at the end of a less-than-vintage campaign he was ignored by the British Lions for last summer's tour of South Africa. If the sporting landscape is littered with the smouldering reputations of those who went one round too many, Carling is now to be found amongst the wreckage.

His final months in the game he once lived and loved to the full were tainted by rows and recriminations, by public arguments and private spin-doctoring carried out by a clique of faithful allies who stuck by him through thick and thin. There were differences with Fran Cotton, the Lions' manager, and a serious falling out with Dick Best, a long-time friend and supporter, which eventually cost the Harlequins coach his job. And then, last weekend, Carling locked horns with Best's successor, Andy Keast, a former London policeman who once disarmed a gunman in the East End. There was, as they say in sport, only one winner.

Yet for almost a decade, Carling was the seminal figure in a golden age of English rugby, an era in which a sweaty jockstrap of a game reached new heights of fashion. When Geoff Cooke, the recently-

appointed coach of a forlorn, flabby, under-performing national team, first capped him 10 years ago this month and then handed him the reins at 22, rugby had found itself a catalyst as well as a captain.

Here was a walking, talking set of credentials, a rugged good-looker who could do the business in the studio and on the catwalk as well as on the pitch and in the dressing-room. Carling was seriously pukka, all Pimms and Putney: if England's last folk-hero captain, Bill Beaumont, had looked like a combine harvester, this boy was a 24-carat Roller with full leather upholstery. He was too damned posh to seduce the suspicious provincial die-hards who lurk in the great rugby heartland of the West Country - ironically enough, he was born in Wiltshire - but the Twickenham set fell for him hook, line and gumshield.

What was more, there was substance beneath the glitzy surface; during the 1990 Five Nations tournament England played their most exhilarating rugby for a generation and Carling, every inch a world-class centre, was the personification of the new expansive style. However, the halo slipped, for the first time, when England travelled to Scotland for the final game, a Grand Slam

decider that generated an interest far beyond the usual confines of the union code. The Scots brought the spirit of Bannockburn to the huddle that day and exposed Carling as both naive and inflexible in his leadership.

Something similar would happen some 18 months later when England contested the 1991 World Cup Final with Australia. This time, Carling was fully equipped with a Plan B. Unfortunately for him, he activated it against opponents who feared Plan A rather more. If leadership means anything in a game of rugby - and there are those who believe captaincy means nothing at all - the red rose army marched into the biggest conflict in their history without a general.

England would subsequently win Triple Crowns and Grand Slams under their still glamorous but increasingly distant father figure, but the main chance had come and gone and Carling knew it. He was earning a fortune, even under amateur regulations - his lectures to war-struck business leaders on teamwork and motivation would not have been nearly so lucrative had he been the captain of Old Rubberducks rather than his country - but his naivety and lack of judgement, already laid bare for all to see

on the field of play, would betray him again.

Just before the 1995 World Cup, he spoke off-camera to a sports documentary crew and referred to the members of the Rugby Football Union as "57 old farts" - a comment that was broadcast, much to Carling's unwelcome astonishment. Old Fartdom reacted sniffily and sacked him, a decision that so infuriated an England camp bristling with player power that they threatened to block any appointment of a new captain. Carling was reinstated inside 48 hours, but from that moment, rugby's enormously influential establishment had him marked down as an outsider. He was no longer "one of us".

In many ways, Carling was never a natural insider anyway. Such contradictory characters seldom are. A diffident man with an almost paranoid suspicion of the media, he now intends to pursue a career as a television anchorman. An instinctive "lad" with a rugby player's capacity for umpteen gallons of beer, he has manufactured and financed a lifestyle that virtually disqualifies him from a simple night out with the boys. Quite how he intends to square those circles without his regular Saturday afternoon adrenalin fix only time - and, no doubt, the tabloids - will tell.

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FIT THE BEST

Sir Michael Tippett

Michael Kemp Tippett, composer; born London 2 January 1905; Director of Music, Morley College 1940-51; CBE 1959, KBE 1966; FRM 1961; Artistic Director, Bath Festival 1969-74; President, Kent Opera Company 1979-98; CH 1979; President, London College of Music 1983-98; OM 1983; died London 8 January 1998.

Michael Tippett died as one of the greatest English composers since Elgar, but the high artistic success he enjoyed was hard-won and long delayed.

He began without a conspicuous excess of natural musical talent. At the Royal College of Music in the 1920s he struggled to gain his degree and master the techniques of composition. He returned there in the early Thirties for further study and, guided in the art of counterpoint by R.O. Morris, finally acquired the skill necessary to speak with a voice of his own. That it would be a very distinctive voice was apparent from the First String Quartet (1935), though a Symphony in B flat (predating the Symphony No 1) written at this time was withdrawn by the composer along with his earlier pieces. The First Piano Sonata (1937) marked a step towards full creative confidence, which was gloriously achieved by the next opus, the Concerto for Double String Orchestra (1939) – still Tippett's most frequently played work.

With the oratorio *A Child of Our Time* (1941) – a deeply affecting work and an ingenious recasting of the baroque passion, substituting negro spirituals for Lutheran chorales – Tippett's reputation was firmly established, at home and abroad. It was the first of a series of some eight major canvases – oratorios or operas – which divide the artist's career into significant stages.

Tippett was a slow, infinitely meditative worker, and preferred to concentrate his energies on large works – their composition sometimes protracted over very long periods – on which smaller ones would draw for material, rather than busy himself with a plethora of incidental commissions (but his "occasional" music, such as the *Divertimento on Sellinger's Round* and the *Suite for the Birthday of Prince Charles*, is none the less exquisite). He wrote no film music.

His smaller-scale works are like satellites of the planetary large ones. The Concerto for Double String Orchestra stands in a similar relation to *A Child of Our Time* (both leanly contrapuntal) as the string *Fantasia Concertante* on a Theme by Corelli (1953) to the vastly lyrical first opera *The Midsummer Marriage* (1952), or the mosaic-like Second Piano Sonata (1962) to the anti-symphonic and Brecht-influenced second opera *King Priam* (1958).

Tippett learnt early on how to hold himself spiritually open to the dawning possibility of a big new work, and how to live with the long-term physical iso-



Tippett in 1974: 'If, in the music I write, I can create a world of sound wherein some of my generation can find refreshment for the inner life, then I am doing my work properly. I have to sing songs for those who can't sing for themselves' Photograph: Hulton Getty

lation and continuous mental planning then required of him. The discipline he achieved served him to the end: he could gesture and triumphantly realise his most ambitious work since *Midsummer Marriage* – *The Mask of Time*, a special sort of oratorio – when he was nearly 80, and go on to create the opera *New Year* (as well as a fifth string quartet, the scena *Byzantium* and tone-poem *The Rose Lake*), in spite of previously having considered his operatic oeuvre complete with his fourth essay in the medium, *The Ice Break* of 1976.

The third opera, *The Knot Garden* (1966-70), is the work in which he disclosed the most autobiographically. It was written at a time when his personal relations had reached a peak of bitterness and severity: as an attempt to confront both his own emotional disorders and those of the age (the Sixties) it is equally agonised and brave. The composer was soon to enjoy an increased emotional and domestic stability (though he always lived alone), but the vision informing his later works is rarely free from scepticism and misgiving.

The affirmative strain – consistently what has mattered most to Tippett – mainly survives in these works as a beau-

tiful impossible dream, an artistic experience at best zany and parenthetical: *The Ice Break* and the Triple Concerto of 1979 look wryly back on Tippett's own earlier music and its lyrical positives; *The Mask of Time* paints a picture of man's evolutionary history that is festooned with ambiguity, and its darker shades perhaps predominate in the memory. The work is far removed in complexion and mood from the earlier oratorio on the subject of time, *The Vision of St Augustine* (1965): 35 minutes of coruscating intensity, a musical epiphany, and some would claim Tippett's greatest work.

Tippett's composing career burgeoned enormously in the Sixties, when the British musical establishment seemed at last to drop its various prejudices against him as an obscurantist (a charge invariably levelled against his librettos, which were always written by himself), a lover of complexity (for a long time his scores were deemed impracticable, even amateurish), an intellectual, and a pacifist (he went to Wormwood Scrubs as a conscientious objector during the Second World War).

King Priam was a prestigious commission to celebrate the opening of the new Coven-

try Cathedral in 1962, and the following year a BBC studio recording (under Norman del Mar) of *The Midsummer Marriage* made an immense impression on listeners, particularly younger ones. It was becoming obvious that Tippett was a genius among us, a truly inspired figure, a consummate maker of images who had the absolute gift (as he himself once defined it) "of knowing what ensemble is, of knowing what the sounds, the colours are going to be to an extraordinary degree". After Britten's death in 1976, he was self-evidently the country's leading composer.

He was knighted in 1966; in 1979 he became a Companion of Honour, and in 1983 joined the Order of Merit. The Gold Medal of the Royal Philharmonic Society came in 1976. From 1959 he was President of the Peace Pledge Union. On the sale of many of his manuscripts to the British Library in 1979 he endowed the Michael Tippett Musical Foundation, a body which has greatly assisted young musicians and new ventures. Apart from his compositional success, Tippett developed a certain reputation as an impassioned if rather wayward conductor, usually of his own music, but occasionally and memorably of Elgar's.

Michael Tippett was one of the most personally sensitive and intellectually responsive men I have ever met – generous and exuberant and open-hearted. He was essentially a lucky life; he lived to see every thing he had done vindicated and applauded. Embarrassments and doubts regularly provoked by his new works soon enough fell away, leaving the latter free to sit by the old, in what now seems like a pure constellation.

— Paul Driver

Michael Tippett was a composer of our time, a maverick – as he liked to say – with rare intellectual depth and social conscience, writes David Revell. His was a century "deeply scarred by wars, revolution and other turmoil, in the course of which I've tried to communicate through music some alternative humane values".

Tippett was born in January 1905. His father, a lawyer, retired early thanks to a knee for investment. "I loved my father," Tippett recalled. "He was a card, full of quips and jokes that appealed to us children." His mother dedicated herself to "campaigning for women's rights and helping to bring succour to the needy".

Young Tippett arrived at

preparatory school, just before the Great War, with an essay which logically demonstrated the non-existence of God. When, aged 13, he arrived at Fettes College in Edinburgh on a scholarship, he refused to join the cadets on moral grounds.

As a child, he was isolated from the centres of music-making. When he first heard the *Mother Goose* suite of Ravel, he felt an overwhelming urge to be a composer, although his headmaster averred that music could never "pay for a boiled egg, let alone a boiled shirt". His parents chafed to meet a musician on a train, who suggested that he study at the Royal College of Music. They agreed to pay his fees provided he take a doctorate in composition; he began his studies in 1923.

Thinking carefully, as he did throughout his career, he decided not to pursue lessons with Vaughan Williams because he saw the dangers of becoming an imitator. His ambitions were grand but his knowledge slight. Tippett caught up on repertoire by attending concerts. He went to plays – discovering Chekhov, Strindberg and above all Shaw – and read voraciously. This began a habit of being informed and inspired by ideas which ran against the grain of mid-century English musical

life. There was an assumption at the Royal College that a composer was "a person of sensibility, but not of intellect", in Tippett's characterisation, "which seemed nonsense". He felt, in the years which followed, that his rejection of this division held back his career.

After leaving the college, he moved to Oxford in Surrey, teaching French in the local preparatory school. Tippett promised himself that everything he did would take second place to composition. He kept his teaching to a minimum, and rejected any opportunity for further work which he felt would take too much time. The result of this commitment was that he lived close to subsistence level.

In 1930, Tippett presented the first concert of his own pieces. Dissatisfied with the result, he withdrew them and signed up for lessons with R.O. Morris, author of the classic English work on counterpoint.

Although he had an "extremely tender" relationship with a young woman, Francesca Allinson, his basic interest was in men, and at the time this caused him some psychological stress. He consulted a Jungian, in due course continuing through self-analysis. This helped him compose – seeking artistic truth "in the depths of the psyche where god-and-devil images also hibernate" – and he felt that composing, in turn, made him whole, reconciled, in Jungian terms, to the shade and light within himself. He tried to convey this insight in his music. To become whole, one must become aware of the divided nature of the psyche. This was, he wrote, "the only truth I shall ever say".

In a newsreel, Tippett saw endless rows of little crosses in the Flanders graveyards. "So this is what happened to all those young men I heard in my teens singing cheerful songs like 'Tippety', he realised. 'I knew I must work towards a climate in which repetition of such brutalities would never be accepted.'"

In the months before the outbreak of war, Tippett was planning an opera on the Dublin Easter uprising. This gave way to the oratorio project *A Child of Our Time*. His music was partly inspired by negro spirituals; after hearing "Steal Away", Tippett had an anthology sent from the States, and found that "they contained words and tunes for every dramatic or religious situation that could be imagined".

Tippett was patronised – in both senses, he implied – by Edith Sitwell and her brothers, and they introduced him to T.S. Eliot. Tippett asked Eliot to write the libretto for *Child*. The poet suggested he would be better served writing it himself, which inaugurated Tippett's habit of writing texts for his own music.

"I knew even then that *A Child of Our Time* was the turning-point in my compositional output," wrote Tippett, "both in terms of technique and subject matter." It made his name, and, like most successful

works, it received many interpretations over the years. Deep South blacks saw their plight reflected, and an AIDS specialist in the Eighties wrote to explain how he felt it related to his patients.

In 1940, Tippett was appointed Director of Music at Morley College, a post he held for 11 years. He invited numerous significant figures, many of whom were refugees from Europe. It was at Morley that he first met Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears, quickly becoming close to both.

During the Second World War, he registered as a conscientious objector, and was assigned non-combatant military duties, which he refused. He was taken to Wormwood Scrubs, handcuffed to a deserter, in the adjoining cell were a rapist and a murderer. His mother subsequently described his imprisonment as her "proudest moment".

After the war, Tippett began presenting radio talks, which provided a modest secondary income; in time he edited and published some of them as *Moving into Aquarius* (1959). Between 1947 and 1952, he worked on *The Midsummer Marriage*, his first opera: as for *Child*, he wrote the text. Its story of a betrothed couple and their journey towards self-knowledge was "written in an extreme polarity to the cultural and social pressures of its period", a life-affirming work for the post-Hiroshima period. It was a "brilliant failure", and several of the works which followed ran into trouble: the first soloist for the Piano Concerto (1953-55) declared it unplayable, and the premiere of the Second Symphony (1956-57) broke down after only a few pages.

Tippett's fortunes improved in the Sixties. *King Priam* was produced with great success by the film-maker Sam Wanamaker as part of the celebrations for the new Coventry Cathedral. In 1965 Tippett made his first visit to America as guest composer at the festival in Aspen, Colorado, and conducting invitations blossomed after he substituted for Stravinsky in a 1968 concert. It was eventually in the United States that his music became most popular.

In the early Seventies, a heart irregularity was diagnosed. Once this was controlled by drugs, he remained otherwise healthy for years, taking long walks and continuing to travel. In 1978 he took his first extended break from composition in half a century to make a world tour, combining holidays with professional appearances. By the end of the decade, Tippett was the grand old man of British music.

"If, in the music I write, I can create a world of sound wherein some of my generation can find refreshment for the inner life, then I am doing my work properly," said Tippett. "I have to sing songs for those who can't sing for themselves. Those songs come from the torments and horrors that have happened. I can't lose faith in humanity."

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

DEATHS

THOMPSON: Dorothy (née Cox) died peacefully on 5 January 1998, aged 92 years. Memorial service to be arranged. Further enquiries: Brighton Unitarian Church, 01273 336320.

IN MEMORIAM

FORTE: Doris Clara. Always remembered vividly – and missed. **SMITH:** Gladys (11 January 1919 – 1 May 1997), devoted sister of the late Evelyn Smith (died 24 August 1997). Thinking of you tomorrow and remembering you always with love. Brothers John and David.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned on 0201-202 2001 or faxed to 0201-202 2000, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. Please include a daytime telephone number.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Duke of York, Patron in Chief, attends the Annual Gathering Presentation of the 1997 British Science Empire Society Expedition at the Royal Geographical Society, Kensington Gate, London SW7.

Changing of the Guard

TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11.30am. **TOMORROW:** The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11.30am. **11.30am:** The Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11.30am. **11.30am:** The Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11.30am.

Birthdays

TODAY: Sir Walter Bodmer, Principal, Hertford College, Oxford, 62; Mr Eddie Cheever, motor-racing driver, 40; Sir Robin Chichester-Clark, former government minister, 70; Mr Tom Clarke MP, Minister for Film and Tourism, 57; Mr Clive Jones, chief executive, Carlton Television, 49; Dr Peter Mathias, former Master, Downing College, Cambridge, 70; Sir David Miers, former ambassador to the Netherlands, 61; Sir David Neuberger, High Court judge, 49; Mr Denis Peach, former Chief Charity Commissioner, 70; Mr Anton Rodgers, actor, 65; Mr Freddie Starr, comedian, 54; Mr Rod Stewart, rock singer, 53; Mrs Valerie Strachan, Chairman, Board of Customs and Excise, 58; Sir Stephen Wall, United Kingdom Permanent Representative to the European Union, 51; Ms Marjorie Wallace, chief executive, Sane, 33.

TOMORROW: Mr Graham Allen MP, 45; The Right Rev John Baker, former Bishop of Salisbury, 70; Lord Bowness, former Director, Henry Moore Foundation, 70; Miss Kathleen Byron, actress, 75; Miss Anna Calder-Marshall, actress, 51; Mr David Cadell, racehorse breeder, 55; Mr Henry Cecil, racehorse trainer, 55; Mr Jean Chrétien QC, Prime Minister of Canada, 64; Mr Barry Flanagan, sculptor, 57; Mr Mick MacManus, wrestler, 71; Sir Alastair Morton, former UK chairman, Eurorummel, 60; Sir Anthony Nutter, former government minister, 78; Mr Bryan Robson, former England football captain, 41; Air Chief Marshal Sir John Rogers, executive chairman, Motor Sports Association, RAC, 70; Mr Arthur Scargill, President of the National Union of Mineworkers, 60; Mr John Sessions, actor and comedian, 45.

FAITH & REASON

A proper role at the negotiating table

Churches in Northern Ireland have for too long confined themselves to condemnations of violence and comforting its victims. As the peace process in Northern Ireland wavers, Ian Linden suggests that the churches ought to look beyond Stormont for insights into how the peace process might be supported.

The Churches in Ireland "found it very difficult to adjust to the peace process". Archbishop Robert Eames was recently quoted as saying. Understandable enough – and commendably honest – given the symbolic role played by religion in the Anglo-Irish conflict fought out between Republicanism and Ulster Unionism. The recent re-emergence of "sectarian" killings is only the latest reminder of this.

The traditional response to this of both the Catholic and Protestant churches has been to condemn the violence and then largely to confine themselves to pastoral work within their respective communities, particularly in

consoling the bereaved. This is admirable, but is it adequate? Such an inward focus binds churches to their communities, but makes it difficult for them to reach across the sectarian divide.

Yet churches or their leaders have played a key role both pastorally and as national mediators in peace processes around the world in which they have not been seen as totally neutral. So why are the Stormont negotiations talked about as if they were a unique example of dialogue taking place with a shooting war uneasily in abeyance?

The Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR) is making a comparative study of peace processes in Colombia, Guatemala, Angola, East Timor and South Africa. Each, of course, has its own unique dynamics but there are certain commonalities. Each process has identifiable stages: facilitating dialogue towards ending armed conflict, negotiations themselves, peacekeeping and monitoring agreements, and finally removing the causes of the war, implementing socio-economic and political changes. The peace process in Northern Ireland is somewhere between the first and second of these difficult stages, which is why extensive

consultations with all groups, including paramilitaries, has become necessary. Mo Mowlam has understood this, and has grasped the nettle with her visit to the Maze prison yesterday.

The example of other countries which are moving along the process, is instructive. In the case of East Timor, the United Nations convened the first round of an All-Inclusive Intra-East Timorese Dialogue in 1995 and an important unofficial mediator in this process has been the head of the Catholic Church in East Timor, the Nobel prizewinner Bishop Carlos Ximenes Bell. The Indonesians view him as a dangerous nationalist but he has been a major bridge-builder.

Studied neutrality has been no option in South Africa. The churches there played a significant role in the peacekeeping and monitoring phase, during 1992-4, in a local and international ecumenical monitoring programme. The Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu became the chair of the controversial Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the leading peace-building structure of the next phase, which attracted a number of church personnel.

In Guatemala talks between the

government and the guerrillas who opposed it resulted in January 1994 in an agreement setting out the framework for negotiations and the establishment of an "Assembly of Civil Society". Although not represented at the negotiating table, the assembly was officially mandated to present the views of civil groups to the parties in the peace talks. Boycotted by the powerful business associations, it none the less received the backing of many in the Catholic Church as well as the United Nations. Through the assembly the organisations of the indigenous Mayan people put forward their demands which resulted, in 1995, in an Accord on the Rights and Identity of Indigenous Peoples. The assembly was initially chaired by Monsignor Quezada Toruño, a highly respected church leader.

A number of lessons can be drawn from all this. Churches and church leaders seeking to intervene in peace processes face the same constraints as any civil or non-governmental organisation. Certain phases are more open to intervention than others. In the final stages of a dirty war, for example, the interests of both sides usually coincide when it comes to setting

up provisions for amnesty laws and immunity from prosecution for those who have been involved in violations of human rights; churches find it difficult to obtain redress for the victims in the face of the military power of the governments or their opponents.

But at other stages – such as when negotiations are in their infancy – churches can intervene effectively and play a key role in the powerful coalitions of civil groups, as in Guatemala and South Africa, to influence outcomes and exert useful pressure to bring back or keep parties at the negotiating table. The special quality of the churches is that their structures enable vital links to be made between local, national and international initiatives for peace. This is important because deals made in smoke-filled rooms in the absence of local peace-making and peace-building are likely to fall apart. And conversely local initiatives that do not dovetail into the national dialogue can simply be crushed, as they have been in Colombia.

The churches in Ireland, therefore, need do more than "adjust" to the peace process. They need to become part of it.

Footsie

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

Footsie suffers as gloom spreads from the Far East

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

The bugbear of Asia returned to haunt the stock market. As the Far Eastern crisis appeared to worsen Footsie fell 98.8 points to 5,138.3.

Not surprisingly shares with a significant Pacific exposure suffered the cruellest blows. The Standard Chartered banking group collapsed 50p to 547p, lowest for more than two years, and HSBC lost 54p to 1,379p, lowest for a year.

Last year Standard touched 1,081.5p; HSBC, with analysts forecasting a run to 2,600p, peaked at 2,347p. Cable & Wireless, with its extensive Far Eastern network, retreated 23p to 494p and international trader Inchcape came off another 7p to 153p.

Until the latest bout of Asian flu, hopes were high that the stock market would soon achieve a new closing peak, topping the 5,330.8 hit in October. Although the undercurrent seemed firm, equities

could not be expected to move serenely ahead with so many markets in despair. New York remained off-colour although the volatile payoff figures failed to create much of a stir.

BT was one of a handful of blue chips to ignore the gloom, rising in a 2p gain to 502.5p, largely on hopes that it plans another cash distribution through a special dividend. BG, the big mover and shaker on Thursday, slipped 1.25p to 303.75p, although its former gas arm, Centrica, edged ahead 1.75p to 95.5p, reflecting the settlement of the last of its cash-sharing take-and-pay gas contracts.

It was not only Far Eastern banking shares which came under pressure. After recent gains the domestic variety were clearly vulnerable to a downturn and Barclays fell 60p to 1,650p and National Westminster Bank 51p to

1,020p. Insurances, also recent higher flyers, felt the pinch.

Among second liners Booker, the cash and carry group, endured a drubbing after producing a profits warning which must have embarrassed SBC Warburg. The shares fell 66.5p to 272.5p. This week the investment house made positive noises about the food group and its shares rose 21.5p, Warburg was impressed by Booker's cost-cutting programme and Charles Bowen, chief executive, said its conclusions were "absolutely right".

He said the group's trading situation only came to light on Thursday and to prevent a false share market developing he decided to issue a warning that profits would be "somewhat below" £80m. The market expected more than £90m. Workday, a luxury services group, was another hit by a profit warning, falling 40.5p to 97p.

Scottish & Newcastle, the brewing group, lost much of a 10p gain after it became apparent it will have to end its exclusive beer supply deal with the 4,300 outlets of the Grand Pub Co. Although it will still deliver to the pubs it will have to include the products of other brewers on its days. The shares ended 2p higher at 742p.

Share buy-in activity continued, with General Electric Co, up 2.25p at 394.5p, picking up 18.5 million shares at 395p. WH Smith's possible sale of its Waterstone's book shops rekindled thoughts of a cash handout, lifting the shares 7.5p to 423p. And Soverfield managed to cling to the bid story, moving ahead a further 5p to 235.5p. Latest theory is that Asda, should it bid, would retain the higher outlets, selling the smaller units to a chain such as Bagnall, up 1p to 58.5p.

Stet, which a mystery bidder had apparently been approaching major shareholders, gained a further 12p to 58p. There is talk of a 75p share offer. Disposals are expected in the next few weeks.

Retailers were mixed as the market waited for the next round of Christmas trading statements. Boots, Dixons, Kingfisher and Next are among those due next week, with Dixons adding the additional music of interim profits figures.

Premier Oil firmed 1.5p to 52.5p. It has made what it describes as a "significant discovery" off Indonesia. Most other oil shares were lower, with British Petroleum off 12p to 778p.

Arriva, the former Cowie group, retreated 24p to 372p on the back of recent continental expansion. Amey, the high flying construction group, gave up 42.5p to 414p. The company confirmed that the Ministry of Defence police were looking into services management contracts at one of its subsidiaries. Amey described the probe as a "routine investigation". The shares have enjoyed a spectacular run, largely on the back of railway maintenance contracts. Two years ago they were 117p.

Oriental Restaurants rose 12p to 251.5p, reacting to recent favourable comments from ABN Amro Hoare Govett.

Prime People, the recruitment group, was the day's best mover, up 28p to 8p. Year's profits could be more than £400,000 against £126,000. It is on the acquisition trail but may be getting closer to the PSD recruitment group, which has nearly 30 per cent.

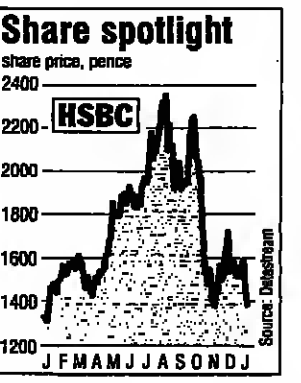
ISA International, the electronic office equipment group, jumped 14.5p in 101p after Charterhouse Tilney produced a target price of 110p. Profits will be lower; CT expects £6.2m for last year, with £6.5m this year.

Prestige Corporate has acquired 8.3 per cent of Delyn, the cash-rich property group at 105p a share against 97.5p in the market.

Pan Andean Resources, seeking nil in Bolivia, has raised £1m, selling shares at 30p; the price fell 1p to 30.5p.

TAKING STOCK

ISA International, the electronic office equipment group, jumped 14.5p in 101p after Charterhouse Tilney produced a target price of 110p. Profits will be lower; CT expects £6.2m for last year, with £6.5m this year.



| High | Low | Stock | Price | Chg | Yld | P/E | Div | Div Yld |
|------|-----|---------------------|--------|-------|-----|------|------|---------|
| 12 | 10 | Alcoholic Beverages | 52.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 13 | 11 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 14 | 12 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 15 | 13 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 16 | 14 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 17 | 15 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 18 | 16 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 19 | 17 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 20 | 18 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 21 | 19 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 22 | 20 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 23 | 21 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 24 | 22 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 25 | 23 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 26 | 24 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 27 | 25 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 28 | 26 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 29 | 27 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 30 | 28 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 31 | 29 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 32 | 30 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 33 | 31 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 34 | 32 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 35 | 33 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 36 | 34 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 37 | 35 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 38 | 36 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 39 | 37 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 40 | 38 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 41 | 39 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 42 | 40 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 43 | 41 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 44 | 42 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 45 | 43 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 46 | 44 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 47 | 45 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 48 | 46 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 49 | 47 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 50 | 48 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 51 | 49 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 52 | 50 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 53 | 51 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 54 | 52 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 55 | 53 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 56 | 54 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 57 | 55 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 58 | 56 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 59 | 57 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 60 | 58 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 61 | 59 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 62 | 60 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 63 | 61 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 64 | 62 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 65 | 63 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 66 | 64 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 67 | 65 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 68 | 66 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 69 | 67 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 70 | 68 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 71 | 69 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 72 | 70 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 73 | 71 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 74 | 72 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 75 | 73 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 76 | 74 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 77 | 75 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 78 | 76 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 79 | 77 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 80 | 78 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 81 | 79 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 82 | 80 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 83 | 81 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 84 | 82 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 85 | 83 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 86 | 84 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 87 | 85 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 88 | 86 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 89 | 87 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 90 | 88 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 91 | 89 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 92 | 90 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 93 | 91 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 94 | 92 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 95 | 93 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 96 | 94 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 97 | 95 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 98 | 96 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 99 | 97 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 100 | 98 | 3M | 240.00 | -0.05 | 4.7 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |

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Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling unless otherwise stated. The yield is the latest twelve months' declared gross dividend as a percentage of the share price. The preceding (P) ratio is the share price to earnings ratio. Other details: Earnings: a - Earnings; b - Earnings; c - Earnings; d - Earnings; e - Earnings; f - Earnings; g - Earnings; h - Earnings; i - Earnings; j - Earnings; k - Earnings; l - Earnings; m - Earnings; n - Earnings; o - Earnings; p - Earnings; q - Earnings; r - Earnings; s - Earnings; t - Earnings; u - Earnings; v - Earnings; w - Earnings; x - Earnings; y - Earnings; z - Earnings; aa - Earnings; ab - Earnings; ac - Earnings; ad - Earnings; ae - Earnings; af - Earnings; ag - Earnings; ah - Earnings; ai - Earnings; aj - Earnings; ak - Earnings; al - Earnings; am - Earnings; an - Earnings; ao - Earnings; ap - Earnings; aq - Earnings; ar - Earnings; as - Earnings; at - Earnings; au - Earnings; av - Earnings; aw - Earnings; ax - Earnings; ay - Earnings; az - Earnings; ba - Earnings; bb - Earnings; bc - Earnings; bd - Earnings; be - Earnings; bf - Earnings; bg - Earnings; bh - Earnings; bi - Earnings; bj - Earnings; bk - Earnings; bl - Earnings; bm - Earnings; bn - Earnings; bo - Earnings; 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ee - Earnings; ef - Earnings; eg - Earnings; eh - Earnings; ei - Earnings; ej - Earnings; ek - Earnings; el - Earnings; em - Earnings; en - Earnings; eo - Earnings; ep - Earnings; eq - Earnings; er - Earnings; es - Earnings; et - Earnings; eu - Earnings; ev - Earnings; ew - Earnings; ex - Earnings; ey - Earnings; ez - Earnings; fa - Earnings; fb - Earnings; fc - Earnings; fd - Earnings; fe - Earnings; ff - Earnings; fg - Earnings; fh - Earnings; fi - Earnings; fj - Earnings; fk - Earnings; fl - Earnings; fm - Earnings; fn - Earnings; fo - Earnings; fp - Earnings; fq - Earnings; fr - Earnings; fs - Earnings; ft - Earnings; fu - Earnings; fv - Earnings; fw - Earnings; fx - Earnings; fy - Earnings; fz - Earnings; ga - Earnings; gb - Earnings; gc - Earnings; gd - Earnings; ge - Earnings; gf - Earnings; gh - Earnings; gi - Earnings; gj - Earnings; gk - Earnings; gl - Earnings; gm - Earnings; gn - Earnings; go - Earnings; gp - Earnings; gq - Earnings; gr - Earnings; gs - Earnings; gt - Earnings; gu - Earnings; gv - Earnings; gw - Earnings; gx - Earnings; gy - Earnings; gz - Earnings; ha - Earnings; hb - Earnings; hc - Earnings; hd - Earnings; he - Earnings; hf - Earnings; hg - Earnings; hh - Earnings; hi - Earnings; hj - Earnings; hk - Earnings; hl - Earnings; hm - Earnings; hn - Earnings; ho - Earnings; hp - Earnings; hq - Earnings; hr - Earnings; hs - Earnings; ht - Earnings; hu - Earnings; hv - Earnings; hw - Earnings; hx - Earnings; hy - Earnings; hz - Earnings; ia - Earnings; ib - Earnings; ic - Earnings; id - Earnings; ie - Earnings; if - Earnings; ig - Earnings; ih - Earnings; ii - Earnings; ij - Earnings; ik - Earnings; il - Earnings; im - Earnings; in - Earnings; io - Earnings; ip - Earnings; iq - Earnings; ir - Earnings; is - Earnings; it - Earnings; iu - Earnings; iv - Earnings; iw - Earnings; ix - Earnings; iy - Earnings; iz - Earnings; ja - Earnings; jb - Earnings; jc - Earnings; jd - Earnings; je - Earnings; jf - Earnings; jg - Earnings; jh - Earnings; ji - Earnings; 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on - Earnings; oo - Earnings; op - Earnings; oq - Earnings; or - Earnings; os - Earnings; ot - Earnings; ou - Earnings; ov - Earnings; ow - Earnings; ox - Earnings; oy - Earnings; oz - Earnings; pa - Earnings; pb - Earnings; pc - Earnings; pd - Earnings; pe - Earnings; pf - Earnings; pg - Earnings; ph - Earnings; pi - Earnings; pj - Earnings; pk - Earnings; pl - Earnings; pm - Earnings; pn - Earnings; po - Earnings; pp - Earnings; pq - Earnings; pr - Earnings; ps - Earnings; pt - Earnings; pu - Earnings; pv - Earnings; pw - Earnings; px - Earnings; py - Earnings; pz - Earnings; qa - Earnings; qb - Earnings; qc - Earnings; qd - Earnings; qe - Earnings; qf - Earnings; qg - Earnings; qh - Earnings; qi - Earnings; qj - Earnings; qk - Earnings; ql - Earnings; qm - Earnings; qn - Earnings; qo - Earnings; qp - Earnings; qq - Earnings; qr - Earnings; qs - Earnings; qt - Earnings; qu - Earnings; qv - Earnings; qw - Earnings; qx - Earnings; qy - Earnings; qz - Earnings; ra - Earnings; rb - Earnings; rc - Earnings; rd - Earnings; re - Earnings; rf - Earnings; rg - Earnings; rh - Earnings; ri - Earnings; rj - Earnings; rk - Earnings; rl - Earnings; rm - Earnings; rn - Earnings; ro - Earnings; rp - Earnings; rq - Earnings; rr - Earnings; rs - Earnings; rt - Earnings; ru - Earnings; rv - Earnings; rw - Earnings; rx - Earnings; ry - Earnings; rz - Earnings; sa - Earnings; sb - Earnings; sc - Earnings; sd - Earnings; se - Earnings; sf - Earnings; sg

BT considers huge investor payout as directory bills soar

British Telecom is considering launching a multi-billion pound special payout to shareholders later this year. The news emerged as BT revealed that customers would have to pay 40 per cent more to use its directory enquiry service. The increase was criticised by one users' group.

Chris Godsmark, Business Correspondent, reports.

BT's senior management, including Sir Peter Bonfield, chief executive, has told City analysts that the group intends to get approval from shareholders to make a buyback at its annual general meeting in July.

Speculation about buybacks helped fuel a 5 per cent surge in BT shares last week, which closed at 502.5p yesterday, up 2p on the day to equal their 12-month peak.

The briefings are the start of a wider campaign by BT to spell out its long-term strategy, following the collapse of its plan to merge with MCI, the US long-distance phone giant. The existing shareholder authority for buybacks expired when BT abandoned its bid for MCI.

A BT spokesman said the group was keeping the issue under review. He continued: "We're not ruling anything out and we're not ruling anything in."

Despite the decision to seek approval for buybacks at the AGM, analysts remain divided about whether BT would press ahead with the move, which could herald a bonanza of some £5bn for shareholders.

Last autumn BT paid out £2.3bn to investors through a 35p-a-share special dividend, announced with its original bid for MCI.

Executives are likely to wait until the group receives £7.5bn (£4.6bn) in cash for its 20 per cent stake in MCI from WorldCom, the US phone giant, which is bidding \$37bn to buy BT's former American merger partner. The deal depends on approval from US regulators, a process which is expected to take several months.

Any buyback would also depend on whether BT found another US partner to replace MCI. Sir Peter has surprised some analysts by suggesting that BT is in "no rush" to launch another US deal.

Sir Peter is also thought to have pointed indirectly to BT's own position as a potential takeover target since the government removed its "golden share" in the group.

One analyst said this looked like an attempt to boost BT's share price when the business was facing increasingly tough competition in the UK and was investing heavily to compete in continental Europe.

Meanwhile yesterday's announcement of a 40 per cent increase in directory enquiry prices will see the cost of a call to the "192" UK service rise from 25p to 35p from 18

February. Calls to the "153" international directory service will increase from 61p to 80p.

BT said the increase was needed to fund its £84m investment programme in the service in the next financial year. The database would be expanded to include mobile, pager and fax numbers by 2000. The service lost £21m in 1996-97 on sales of £115m. The cost of directory enquiry services, which were free until April 1991, was cut from 45p to 25p four years ago.

"Very few residential customers regularly use directory enquiries and they shouldn't be paying for it. This is about fairness, with the people who use the service paying for it," said the spokesman.

About 60 per cent of calls to the service are made by businesses.

But Steve Thorpe, of the Telecommunications Users' Association, described the price hike as "completely unjust." He said: "The customer shouldn't be funding new technology when this is a public service."

At the same time BT is proposing to provide directory information through the Internet for free, with customers paying only the normal cost to their service provider.

Ofcom, the watchdog, described the price increase as a "commercial decision" for BT but warned that it had not been consulted about the Internet enquiry service. "We'll be looking at this very closely to see if there are any data protection problems," said an Ofcom spokesman.



Prime Minister Tony Blair (left) shaking hands with Hiroshi Okuda, the Toyota Motor president, at the end of a joint news conference in a Tokyo hotel. Photograph: Reuters

Toyota's expansion could herald car investment boom

The Government is hoping to attract a string of Japanese and American car component firms into the UK following Toyota's confirmation yesterday that it is to double production at its Deeside engine plant through a £150m investment creating 310 jobs. Michael Harrison reports.

Trade and industry officials are confident of attracting fresh inward investment into the motor industry in the wake of the Toyota expansion in North Wales. Negotiations on a number of projects are thought to be at an advanced stage.

The Welsh Development Agency is ready to offer Ford an aid package to build engines for the new X400 baby Jaguar at its Bridgend plant in South Wales.

There are also hopes that the increase in production at Nissan's Sunderland plant to 300,000 cars a year with the introduction of a third model

will tempt more suppliers of heavy, high-value components such as transmissions to set up in the UK.

Japanese car firms have now invested £3.7bn in UK manufacturing facilities, creating 10,000 jobs. The latest Toyota expansion brings its UK investment to £1.5bn. However, Britain has only been partially successful in attracting component firms. Only nine of Japan's 20 largest component suppliers have manufacturing operations in the UK.

The expansion of the Deeside site will double its output of engines to 400,000 a year and include a new castings plant. Negotiations are still going on over the level of aid Toyota will receive, although it is expected to be less than £3m. The increase in engine production will enable it to supply both the Burnaston car plant in Derbyshire and the new small car assembly plant Toyota is building to Valecienne, northern France.

According to some estimates, the new small car, based on the existing Starlet model, will contain up to 50 per cent British content.

The Deeside investment will take its workforce in North Wales to 600. By the time Burnaston begins production of a second model, the Corolla, late this year, the workforce there will have reached 3,000.

Speaking in Japan after meeting Hiroshi Okuda, the president of Toyota, the Prime Minister Tony Blair said: "It shows yet again the continuing confidence people have in the UK economy."

Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, who is on a trade mission to the Far East, said that following Jaguar's decision to build the X400 at Halewood, Toyota's announcement was "further endorsement of the UK as the number one location for automotive investment in Europe".

Officials deny that the strength of the pound or Britain's decision to stay out of the European single currency is deterring inward investors, pointing out that the UK continues to attract 40 per cent of all Japanese investment into the European Union.

Total Japanese investment in the UK stands at £31bn out of a total inward investment stock of £140bn.

Waterstone set to regain book empire

Tim Waterstone looked set to regain control of his book-selling empire yesterday when it emerged that the music group EMI was in exclusive talks to buy Waterstone's from WH Smith and install the chain's entrepreneurial founder as chairman. The deal would create the UK's largest bookselling chain and enable WH Smith to return up to £200m to shareholders.

EMI, which also owns the Dillons and HMV stores, confirmed it was considering a joint venture bid to buy Waterstone's in a deal that could value the chain at £250m-£300m. Though the statement did not mention Mr Waterstone by name it is understood that he would be non-executive chairman of a new company that would include Waterstone's, Dillons and HMV. Alan Giles, Waterstone's chief executive, would run the merged book division while Stuart MacAllister would remain in charge of HMV. It is thought that both the Waterstone's and Dillons names would be retained.

The deal would be sweet comeback for Mr Waterstone who failed last autumn in an audacious £1bn offer for the whole WH Smith group. That approach was rejected and WH Smith, under Richard Handover, the new chief executive, announced a break-up plan to demerge Waterstone's and sell its interest in Our Price music. Waterstone's was due to be demerged in the spring.

Tim Waterstone is being backed by Advent, the venture

capital group, while SBC Warburg Dillon Reed is advising EMI. SBC Warburg acted as Mr Waterstone's adviser during his approach to Smith's.

A trade sale would benefit Smith's as it would involve fewer costs than a demerger which analysts originally suggested could value Waterstone's at up to £350m.

It is now thought unlikely that Waterstone's management will attempt a buy-out of its own. Mr Giles and Mr Waterstone get along well and worked together for several months when Mr Giles was first placed in charge of the group.

EMI's interest in merging Dillons and Waterstone's is a result of its concerns that it does not have sufficient clout in a rapidly consolidating market.

Analysts feel the Waterstone's deal may ultimately be a way for EMI to reduce its exposure to books. They say the Dillons-Waterstone's combination may eventually be floated off as a separate company. "Overall, it seems to provide an exit for EMI to extract itself from the retailing end of the business to focus on its core of music publishing and recorded music," said Anthony de Larina, media analyst at Panmure Gordon.

The merged company would have 450 stores (including HMV) and control 17 per cent of Britain's book market. WH Smith has a 15 per cent share. Analysts do not expect the deal to run into regulatory problems.

Nigel Cope

No price cuts yet for British Gas's low-income customers

Moves to cut prices for low-income British Gas customers collapsed in confusion last night as Ofgas, the industry watchdog, abandoned its announcement at the last minute. It means low-spending homes will have to wait for news of price reductions, while bills for most other customers will fall by 9 per cent from Monday. Chris Godsmark reports.

Ofgas had been planning to issue a press release yesterday afternoon which was expected to announce interim price cuts for around a million households with pre-payment meters. But the watchdog unexpectedly changed its mind yesterday evening, without explanation.

Sources close to Ofgas said some technical details about the statement had not been set-

led. But a spokesman said: "We cannot say anything until Monday. Something should be coming out then."

However a British Gas spokeswoman said the two sides were still negotiating, although Ofgas had been about to fax its press release to journalists. "Discussions have been going on since July and we're still talking. The Ofgas statement was just a skeleton. It's not a big shock horror problem."

The chaos means British Gas will push ahead with nationwide price reductions for 16 million of its 19 million residential customers on Monday, while charges for pre-payment meter households will remain frozen. A further two million homes paying through various budget plans will also have to wait longer to hear whether they will receive any reduction.

British Gas is knocking 9 per cent off bills for customers paying by direct debit, worth almost £29 in annual savings, while homes settling bills promptly will

see bills fall by 8 per cent. The reductions are largely the result of cuts in pipeline charges paid to Transco, the pipeline network which is now a separate business to the British Gas supply group.

There had been speculation that Ofgas would reveal price reductions for pre-payment customers of around 3 per cent, worth some £7 of annual charges. The other 2 million low-income homes were expected to have to wait longer to hear whether they would get similar reductions.

The statement would have been seen as a partial victory for the Gas Consumers Council (GCC), which had campaigned to see the national price cap implemented across all homes. Sue Slipman, the GCC's director, was perplexed about Ofgas's decision to abandon its statement.

"We were very much hoping there would be an announcement. We had been expecting one. We've got no idea why it hasn't been made," she said.

Wall Street and London fall as US job figures revive inflation fears

The American economy generated an astonishing number of new jobs once again in December. Financial markets in the US and UK, rather than rejoicing, took a tumble as the figures revived concerns that inflation would pick up. Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, weighs up the risks while Stephen Vines reports on the continuing Asian crisis.

Employment in the US jumped by 370,000 in December, far more than any economists had been predicting. The increase followed a November increase revised up to 412,000, and took the number of Americans in employment to an all-time record of 64.1 per cent.

The pace of job creation has gathered steam, with an extra 3.2 million generated last year, up from 2.5 million in 1996. The unemployment rate stood at 4.7 per cent last month. The Labor Department described unemployment, at 6.4 million, as "essentially unchanged" from its quarter-century low.

Wall Street saw yesterday's jobs report as tilting the balance slightly back towards an interest rate rise at some future date. The Treasury bond market retreated from its recent peak, while the Dow Jones index fell as much as 140 points to 7,662.62 late-morning before regaining a bit of lost ground.

In London, the FTSE-100 index closed 98.8 points lower at 5,138.3, driven by the weak start on Wall Street and Asian woes.

The contrast between the US and continental jobs markets was highlighted by German fig-

ures showing an unexpected increase of 20,000 in unemployment to 4.55 million in December. A German news agency reported Chancellor Helmut Kohl as saying it would not be possible to meet his earlier pledge to halve unemployment by the year 2000.

And in France, the government announced an extra £1bn (£100m) fund to increase benefits for the unemployed, in response to protests. France's jobless rate is at a post-war high of 12.4 per cent.

The startlingly good US jobs figures were accompanied by news of only a small rise in average hourly earnings to \$12.45, a cent up on the month. The December earnings figure was subdued, however, by the fact that there were three extra working days in the month, and is likely to bounce higher in January.

Earnings growth has climbed steadily to a rate of

around 4 per cent in the latest quarter - still low given the drop in unemployment.

Meanwhile, in Indonesia the stock market looked poised to break its recent record of hitting new lows every day as prices actually rose in early trading, only to end the day with a 1 per cent fall. However, the local currency surged some 25 per cent.

This faint whiff of optimism came with news that Bill Clinton, the US President, had personally intervened in the crisis by way of a 25-minute telephone conversation with President Suharto, during which he secured Indonesian agreement to take the bitter medicine proscribed by the International Monetary Fund as the price for its \$43bn bail-out.

Later in the day President Suharto issued a statement saying he would fully implement the IMF's plans.

Hong Kong investment bank rescue falls through

Peregrine Investment Holdings, one of Asia's largest and fastest-growing investment banks, is poised to become the most high profile victim of the Asian financial crisis.

After repeated delays Peregrine, a Hong Kong company, yesterday announced that what amounted to a rescue by the Swiss-based Zurich Group had fallen through. Zurich had initially agreed to buy a 24 per cent stake in the troubled Peregrine group for \$200m (£120m). The First Chicago Bank National Bank had also promised to buy a smaller stake for \$50m.

The absence of this cash infusion places a large question mark over the future of Peregrine, one of Asia's most aggressive and, at one time, most successful deal-makers.

Peregrine Brokerage, a wholly owned subsidiary of the company, has been suspended from membership of the Hong

Kong stock exchange. Traders have been told that they need not report for work on Monday.

However, the company insists that it is looking for other partners to take a stake in Peregrine.

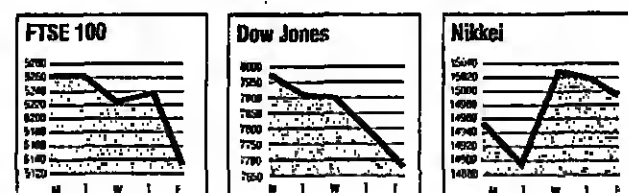
The exact nature of Peregrine's problems are not known. Peregrine is also understood to be owed \$265m by an Indonesian transportation company called Steady Safe which has close ties to the family of Indonesia's President Suharto. This debt is close to one-third of Peregrine's capital. It was due to be repaid by a Steady Safe share issue which failed to get approval.

Many of Hong Kong's leading businessmen, including the most influential, Li Ka-shing, have been linked with Peregrine and have helped it achieve record amounts of business in its brief nine-year history.

INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

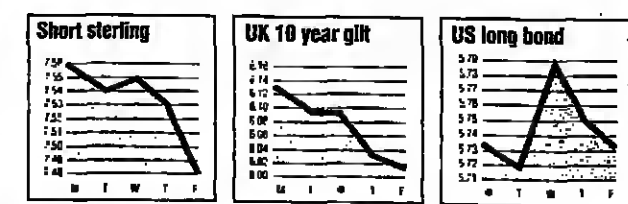
This weekend, the *Independent on Sunday* begins its eighth annual search for Britain's fastest-growing private companies. Many of the companies identified by previous listings compiled by the newspaper in association with the accountants Price Waterhouse have, like those named above, gone on to become substantial public companies. The growing importance of this sector of the economy is increasingly widely recognised. As the longest-running survey, the *Independent 100* has become a highly reliable indicator of future business success.

STOCK MARKETS



| Indices | Close | Change | Change(%) | 52 wk high | 52 wk low | Yield(%) |
|----------------|----------|---------|-----------|------------|-----------|----------|
| FTSE 100 | 5138.30 | -98.80 | -1.89 | 5367.30 | 4036.90 | 3.32 |
| FTSE 250 | 4864.60 | -15.40 | -0.32 | 4963.80 | 4384.20 | 3.20 |
| FTSE 350 | 2476.20 | -40.10 | -1.59 | 2570.50 | 2013.40 | 3.30 |
| FTSE All Share | 2421.15 | -36.39 | -1.48 | 2507.68 | 1996.91 | 3.28 |
| FTSE SmallCap | 2248.20 | 3.00 | 0.13 | 2407.40 | 2182.10 | 2.96 |
| FTSE FTSE100 | 1273.90 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 1346.50 | 1225.20 | 3.28 |
| FTSE AIM | 989.40 | -1.70 | -0.17 | 1138.00 | 865.90 | 1.18 |
| Dow Jones | 7666.25 | -119.57 | -1.55 | 8298.03 | 6366.78 | 1.78 |
| Nikkei | 14095.10 | -24.08 | -0.16 | 20810.78 | 14088.21 | 1.02 |
| Hong Kong | 8894.64 | -358.89 | -3.99 | 16820.31 | 8775.80 | 4.77 |
| Dax | 4236.94 | -110.29 | -2.54 | 4458.89 | 2886.22 | 1.71 |

INTEREST RATES

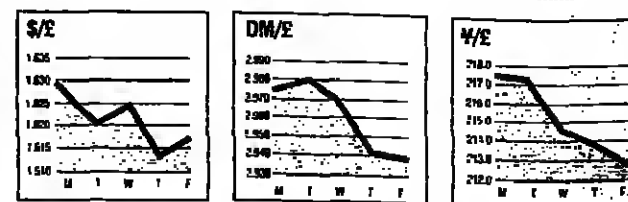


| Money Market Rates | 10 year | 1 year | 3 month | 10 year | 1 year | 3 month | 10 year | 1 year | 3 month |
|--------------------|---------|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| UK | 7.55 | 1.04 | 7.55 | 0.52 | 6.01 | 1.62 | 5.98 | 1.26 | 1.26 |
| US | 5.56 | 0.89 | 5.56 | 0.19 | 5.45 | 1.05 | 5.74 | 1.02 | 1.02 |
| Japan | 0.74 | 0.24 | 0.74 | 0.14 | 1.88 | 0.78 | 2.50 | 0.78 | 0.78 |
| Germany | 3.59 | 0.45 | 3.89 | 0.64 | 5.08 | 0.80 | 5.84 | 1.12 | 1.12 |

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

| Rises | Falls |
|-----------------|------------|
| Brit Biotech | Booker PLC |
| Skypharm PLC | |
| Aviva PLC | |
| Pfizer Property | |

CURRENCIES



| Pound | 10 year | 1 year | 3 month | 10 year | 1 year | 3 month |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| Dollar | 1.6168 | +0.02c | 1.6988 | 0.6185 | -0.20p | 0.5883 |
| D-Mark | 2.9405 | +0.83p | 2.8812 | 1.8195 | -0.02p | 1.5774 |
| Yen | 212.68 | -0.78 | 197.80 | 131.56 | -0.91 | 116.26 |
| Silver | 103.60 | +0.00 | 96.80 | 109.90 | -0.50 | 98.90 |

OTHER INDICATORS

| Index | Close | Chg | Yr Ago | Index | Close | Chg | Yr Ago |
|----------------|--------|-------|--------|------------|--------|------|--------|
| Brent Oil (\$) | 15.02 | -0.05 | 24.88 | GDP | 113.90 | 3.70 | 109.84 |
| Gold (\$) | 279.55 | -1.80 | 357.55 | RPI | 159.80 | 3.70 | 153.91 |
| Silver (\$) | 5.74 | -0.32 | 4.86 | Base Rates | 7.25 | 6.00 | |

www.bloomberg.com

source: Bloomberg

JEREMY WARNER
ON WHY
FALLING
LONG-TERM
INTEREST
RATES COULD
BE BAD NEWS
FOR EQUITIES

Scottish
supply
cheers

North & Newcastle
has an exclusive
right to provide beer
to Grand Pub
the largest
pub in the
country.
This reports on
what should herald
information of the
industry, giving
it a wider
perspective but
more hardship
to them.

former Volksw

Exchange Rates

Spot Rates



JEREMY WARNER ON WHY FALLING LONG-TERM INTEREST RATES COULD BE BAD NEWS FOR EQUITIES

Don't count on a happy ending for markets

The portents are strange this year: tornadoes in Selsey; spring buds in January; floods in the West Country; and now National Savings, which has taken to offering a higher return on short-term deposits than on long-term ones. Long-term savers normally expect to be rewarded for their thrift. What's happening? Has the world gone mad?

Perhaps not quite yet, but the National Savings move does in its own small way neatly illustrate the seismic shift taking place throughout the developed world in investment perceptions and patterns right now.

National Savings this week cut its rates on new pensioner bonds and children's bonds by half a percentage point to 6.5 per cent and 6.25 per cent respectively. Both bonds involve a five-year lock-in. National Savings income bonds, on the other hand, which can be withdrawn on three months' notice, now pay 7 per cent.

The situation is not quite as bizarre as it might seem, since the longer-term bonds are tax-free and therefore continue to deliver a higher effective return than the shorter ones.

Even so, this is a pretty odd turn of events and no mistake. Will we soon be in a position where it is better to save short-term than long-term? Few other savings in-

stitutions yet exactly mirror the position at National Savings, but they are all beginning to drift in that direction. Actually, what National Savings is doing is driven, not by madness, but by what's happening in the capital markets. Yields on long-dated gilts are now lower than at any time since the 1960s, but short-term interest rates continue at a relatively high level.

The reasons for this are well rehearsed. The newly independent Bank of England has thought it necessary to drive up base rates so as to choke off perceived inflationary dangers. Meanwhile, long-term interest rates have been falling. This is being caused by three factors. In part it is down to faith in the Bank's ability to hold the lid on inflation. Another factor is convergence with long-term interest rates in Germany as Britain warms to the single currency.

But perhaps most important of all, Britain is mirroring what is happening throughout the developed world. In the US, the yield on the benchmark Treasury long bond is now lower than it has been at any stage since the great depression of the 1930s.

So radically do things seem to have changed that it is now possible to think in terms of falling prices during the next leg of the business cycle. Increased competition thanks to globalisation, the effect of

new technology, the Asian crisis and a perhaps overly cautious monetary policy, mean that for the first time since the 1930s there is a real, if perhaps exaggerated, possibility of deflation.

This is having some abnormal consequences for investment returns. One of the big stories this week, for instance, has been the steady stream of announcements from life assurance companies of cuts in guaranteed annual bonuses. Given that both equity and bond prices had a record year last year, many policyholders are going to find this hard to understand.

Again the phenomenon is explained by lower anticipated rates of return, particularly on bonds. Returns on new investment have, in fact, been declining steadily throughout most of the 1990s, but many life companies chose to turn a blind eye to this and continued to declare quite high annual bonus rates by bolstering them from free reserves.

After the sharp gains in gilts last year, the dam can now no longer be held. For pensions business, the fall in returns on gilts has been exacerbated by the abolition of the tax credit on dividends. Annual bonuses cannot continue to be "guaranteed" at former inflated levels. Most life companies are keen to stress that lower annual bonus

levels do not necessarily mean policyholders will be any less well off. Lower returns reflect lower anticipated rates of inflation, so, in real terms, policyholders ought to be unaffected.

Indeed, if inflation does sink to zero or less, as it has done already in Japan, it is possible to imagine a situation where real rates of return become higher for savers than they are now or traditionally have been - on bonds at least. As Alan Greenspan, chairman of the US Federal Reserve, pointed out in a speech last weekend, since nominal interest rates cannot fall below zero, falling prices for goods and services raise the possibility of increased real interest rates.

Since the middle of last year, there has been extreme volatility in equity markets, triggered by the crisis in the Far East and fears that this might cause a global deflation. At its worst, this might be similar in its consequences to the great depression of the 1930s. Overly alarmist stuff, perhaps. All the same, falling prices, particularly at a time of rising wage costs, would have serious implications for corporate profits.

At the very least, Western industries, are going to be hit by a flood of cheap imports from the former Tiger economies. No wonder Wall Street is no higher now than it was

last August. Wall Street's bull market is already at an end, even if US equities are so far resisting a fully fledged bear market.

The bull market in bonds has none the less continued apace. Normally the two move in tandem, believing that what's good for bonds is also good for equities. Now the two are showing unwavering signs of decoupling. The effect of this has been to narrow the traditional yield gap between equities and bonds from its "normal" level of something above 2 per cent, to something below 2 per cent. Few market analysts expect it to reverse back the other way, so that "safe" bonds once more begin to yield less than "risky" equities, as they did in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. But quite a lot think the gap will continue narrowing.

There are two ways in which this could happen. Either equities could fall, or the bull market in bonds might persist while equities continue to tread water. Of the two, the former possibility looks for the time being to be the most likely. Don't count on it though. If there is no adequate policy response to the problems of the Far East and deflation becomes a reality, even on a limited scale, we might be looking at a combination of bear and bull markets in equities and bonds. Not good, not good at all.

Scottish & Newcastle supply monopoly blow cheers beer drinkers

Scottish & Newcastle has lost an exclusive contract to provide beer to the Grand Pub Company, the largest independent inns group in the country, Andrew Yates reports on a deal that should herald a transformation of the pub industry, giving customers a wider choice of beers but causing more hardship for brewers.

Regulars at Grand Pub's 4,300 hostels will be able to choose from an array of new beer brands as well as their traditional staples such as Foster's and John Smiths. The pub group yesterday sealed a new supply deal with a host of big brewers such as Whitbread and Bass which could see the introduction of best-selling lagers such as Carling Black Label and Budweiser and popular bitters such as Toleys and Boddingtons bitters.

But the news is a blow to Scottish & Newcastle (S&N) who have lost their monopoly over one of the biggest supply deals in the industry which they have held since 1991. The contract is for 1.3 million barrels, equivalent to 290 million pints, and is worth about £250m pounds to the brewing industry. The new agreement is likely to cost S&N more than £20m in lost profits according to industry analysts.

S&N has been forced to increase beer discounts by about £15 a barrel. The brewer is also likely to lose a third of its sales over the next few years as drinkers switch to other brands. S&N shares rose 10p to 750p in early trading but fell back to 742p as the market digested the introduction of new rivals.

Nomura, the Japanese investment bank, created Grand Pub last year after it bought the Innkeeper and Spring Inns pub chains from Grand Metropolitan and Foster's. The deal will secure higher discounts for tenants which have taken legal action against the chains, ac-

curring the pub chains of forcing them to pay extortionate beer prices in the past. It will also underpin the pub group's profits and increase the chances of an eventual stock market flotation.

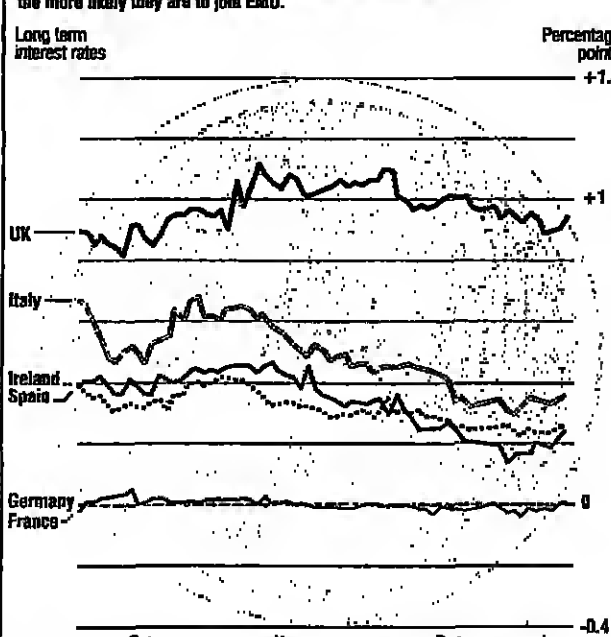
The innovative deal allows pub tenants to choose from a shopping list of beers. "This is a ground-breaking move and should lead to a big stake-up in the beer industry with a wider choice of beers on offer but smaller, regional groups with weaker brands risk being squeezed out," said one drinks analyst.

S&N admitted that the announcement was bad news but was not unexpected. "There will be some erosion of our brand position. However, more large independent estates are turning to multi-sourcing and we could pick up volume elsewhere," said an S&N spokesman.

A spokesman for Camra, the real ale lobby group, said: "We welcome the wider choice it offers customers and that pub tenants still have the right to provide guest ales. But this is only the first step."

Who will be in EMU? The financial markets' view

The closer other countries get to the dashed baseline (Germany) the more likely they are to join EMU.



TOWARDS EMU: The line moves towards the German base line it means investors no longer require such a high premium for holding that country's bonds compared to German ones, because they are confident the currency won't devalue against the mark. In other words, they think that country will be locked into a single currency with Germany in 10 years time.

AWAY FROM EMU: However, if they think the country won't be in EMU, that it will have higher inflation, and that there is a risk of a future devaluation against the mark, then they will demand an extra premium for holding that country's bonds, so the line will move away from the base.

When will EMU start? The City Analysts' View.

The independent asked analysts from:
Nikko Europe, Palne Webber, ABN Amro, JP Morgan, Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, Salomon Brothers, Goldman Sachs, HSBC James Capel, UBS
what probability they placed on EMU starting on time.

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| Probability EMU starts on time | 96% |
| Probability EMU is delayed | 10.5% |
| Probability EMU never happens | 3.5% |

EMU odds continue to shorten

The odds that economic and monetary union (EMU) will go ahead on time were shortened this week as evidence mounted that "in" countries would meet the Maastricht criteria.

The most sceptical economist on *The Independent's* panel of experts, Stephen King of James Capel, now believes there is a 75 per cent likelihood that 11 countries will enter monetary union in January 1999. "Countries like Italy have made further progress in terms of reducing deficits. The arguments in favour of delay are getting weaker," Mr King said.

The panel said central bankers had successfully beaten off any threat that the Asian currency crisis would upset the exchange rate mechanism. Jean-Claude Trichet, Governor of the Bank of France, and Wim Duisenberg, head of the European Monetary Institute, had both made upbeat comments.

Lingering doubts focus on Germany. Four German academics will on Monday put a case to the country's constitutional court, which includes judges who have criticised a failure to keep strictly to Maastricht. However, the panel said the court is unlikely to come out against the German government, as long as the Bundesbank is in favour.

John Lewis signals a good start to winter sales

John Lewis Partnership, the department store and Waitrose supermarket group, provided the first signal yesterday that the winter sales had got off to a flying start. In the week to 3 January, the first week after Christmas, sales in John Lewis's department stores were a remarkable 33.4 per cent ahead of the same week last year. Some of this gain was because the stores were open for an extra day but the group was still jubilant.

"People were definitely feeling the need to spend," a spokeswoman said. "A lot of people took two weeks holiday and they came out shopping because they felt they were going to get really good bargains."

Sketchley spurns approach

Sketchley, the troubled dry cleaning group, has rejected a tentative approach from a mystery bidder and is seeking clarification of the bidder's position. The predator made an approach to some of Sketchley's institutional investors in the last few days though some yesterday described the proposals as "somewhat unclear". Sketchley's shares shot up 10p to 56p on the news.

Sketchley has been in trouble for the last two years and reported a £4m loss in 1997 after a black hole in its accounts revealed £11m of losses. It is expected to announce some disposals next week, which could include the main high street dry cleaning chain.

Watmoughs offer extended

Quebecor Printing Inc (QPI), the Canadian company that last month launched a 257p bid for Watmoughs, the UK printing company, said its cash offers had been extended and would remain open until 3pm on 22 January. It said that, as of 3pm on Thursday, valid acceptances of the offers had been received in respect of approximately 0.1 per cent and 4.1 per cent respectively of Watmoughs' issued ordinary and preference share capital.

Booker shares plunge

Shares in Booker plunged 20 per cent after the food distributor said poor sales at its food wholesale units would push its 1997 profits below the previous year's figure. The shares fell 67.5p to 271.5p after the warning, the company's second in four months. Booker said pre-tax profit would be "somewhat below" £80m after a disappointing end to the year at its BBW wholesale unit.

Television Corp's new chief

Television Corporation, the television facilities provider, has appointed Chris Rowlands as chief executive designate. Mr Rowlands, 46, was chief executive of HTV Group until June 1997, when it was acquired by United News & Media. He will become Television Corp's chief executive on 1 July, when chairman Richard Dunn will stand down and he replaced by chief executive Terry Bate.

COMPANY RESULTS

| | Turnover | Pre-tax | EPS | Dividend |
|---------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|-----------|
| ITS Group (p) | £3.4m (2.4m) | £0.12m (0.27m) | 1.2p (0.4p) | - |
| Kalamazoo (p) | 33.9m (35.2m) | -0.51m (2.3m) | -1.0p (3.7p) | 1p (1.2p) |

(p) - Profit (l) - Loss (c) - EPS is pre-exceptional *Dividend to be paid as a RD

Former Volkswagen chief seriously hurt in car crash

Jose Ignacio Lopez, the former Volkswagen executive who was at the centre of an industrial espionage battle between VW and General Motors, was last night in hospital in a serious condition after a car crash.

Doctors said a brain scan had shown "areas of cerebral contusions", but the extent of the injuries was unclear and more tests were being conducted. "He is still in intensive care and his condition remains very serious," a statement from the hospital said.

Mr Lopez, 56, will remain under observation until doctors decide whether surgery will be necessary. He

took a severe blow to the head when his Audi 80 smashed into a truck.

Mr Lopez became famous for introducing revolutionary measures to cut costs in the car industry in the early 1990s. He defected from General Motors to Volkswagen early in 1993, and implemented headline measures which helped put the ailing German car-maker back into profit.

However, his reputation was tainted by allegations by General Motors that he stole confidential documents and gave them to Volkswagen. He denied this but was forced to resign in 1996.



Jose Ignacio Lopez: Forced to resign over industrial espionage

Managers buy back RJB mine

One of the UK's smallest coal mines, with a history dating back to the 1700s, has been sold to its management by RJB Mining, the country's largest coal producer.

RJB bought Blenkinsopp Colliery, on the border between Northumberland and Cumbria, from shareholders including Alan Wardle, its managing director, in 1990. Yesterday RJB announced that Mr Wardle and his management had bought the colliery back for an undisclosed sum. It leaves RJB with 16 collieries acquired during the 1994 privatisation of British Coal.

Richard Budge, RJB's chief exec-

utive, said the decision to sell Blenkinsopp was not connected with the crisis over the industry's long term future. "The mine is small and isolated from our mainstream operations. Its activities are best managed locally," said Mr Budge.

Blenkinsopp escaped privatisation in the 1940s. Mr Wardle said his family had remained connected with the pit, where he has worked since the 1960s.

The sale included about 25 compulsory redundancies at the pit, which will reduce the workforce to 100.

- Chris Godsmark

Foreign Exchange Rates

| Country | Sterling | Dollar | 1 month | 3 month | D-Mark |
|-------------|----------|--------|---------|---------|--------|
| Australia | 100.00 | 0.69 | 0.69 | 0.69 | 0.0402 |
| Canada | 2.4833 | 1.5450 | 1.5450 | 1.5450 | 0.8494 |
| France | 20.485 | 16.577 | 16.577 | 16.577 | 0.7892 |
| Germany | 163.44 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 0.7892 |
| Italy | 2.3004 | 2.2800 | 2.2800 | 2.2800 | 0.7945 |
| Japan | 11.83 | 11.83 | 11.83 | 11.83 | 0.8078 |
| Netherlands | 1.4838 | 1.4772 | 1.4772 | 1.4772 | 0.8185 |
| Spain | 168.04 | 168.04 | 168.04 | 168.04 | 0.8279 |
| Sweden | 8.6873 | 8.6873 | 8.6873 | 8.6873 | 0.8375 |
| Switzerland | 1.4838 | 1.4772 | 1.4772 | 1.4772 | 0.8443 |
| UK | 100.00 | 0.69 | 0.69 | 0.69 | 0.0402 |
| US | 1.5450 | 1.5450 | 1.5450 | 1.5450 | 0.8494 |

Other Spot Rates

| Country | Sterling | Dollar | Country | Sterling | Dollar |
|-----------|----------|--------|-------------|----------|--------|
| Argentina | 1260 | 10000 | Iran | 7104 | 44000 |
| Brazil | 18082 | 1000 | Philippines | 71348 | 44000 |
| China | 8.2764 | 8.2764 | Poland | 337045 | 33000 |
| Czech Rep | 57.481 | 35.570 | Russia | 33898 | 33898 |
| Egypt | 5.4982 | 34.030 | S. Korea | 80459 | 39880 |
| Ghana | 35.714 | 22.510 | Taiwan | 28250 | 16000 |
| India | 32.921 | 22.510 | Thailand | 54.528 | 32990 |
| Indonesia | 6.455 | 38.700 | Turkey | 82.780 | 27280 |
| Israel | 3.7074 | 8.620 | UAE | 34.845 | 21600 |
| Kuwait | 0.4945 | 0.3000 | | 58.948 | 35728 |
| Nigeria | 12.038 | 7.4550 | | | |

Interest Rates

| UK | Germany | US | Japan |
|--------------|---------|----------|-------|
| Base | 7.25% | Discount | 8.50% |
| Prime | 6.00% | Discount | 5.00% |
| Intervention | 3.30% | Discount | 5.38% |
| Italy | 6.00% | Discount | 5.38% |
| Discount | 5.50% | Discount | 4.75% |
| Netherlands | 3.30% | Discount | 4.35% |
| Spain | 3.30% | Discount | 4.35% |

Bond Yields

| Country | 3 mth | 1 yr | 2 yr | 5 yr | 10 yr |
|-------------|-------|------|------|------|-------|
| Australia | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 |
| Canada | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 |
| France | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 |
| Germany | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 |
| Italy | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 |
| Japan | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 |
| Netherlands | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 |
| Spain | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 |
| Sweden | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 |
| Switzerland | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 |
| UK | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 | 4.85 |

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Life Financial Futures

| Contract | Mar 98 | Jun 98 | Sep 98 | Dec 98 | Mar 99 |
|------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Long Call | 102.75 | 102.75 | 102.75 | 102.75 | 102.75 |
| Short Put | 102.75 | 102.75 | 102.75 | 102.75 | 102.75 |
| Long Put | 102.75 | 102.75 | 102.75 | 102.75 | 102.75 |
| Short Call | 102.75 | 102.75 | 102.75 | 102.75 | 102.75 |

Life FTSE 100 Index Option

| Settlement | High | Low | Settlement | High | Low |
|------------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|
| Mar 98 | 102.75 | 102.75 | Jun 98 | 102.75 | 102.75 |
| Jun 98 | 102.75 | 102.75 | Sep 98 | 102.75 | 102.75 |
| Sep 98 | 102.75 | 102.75 | Dec 98 | 102.75 | 102.75 |
| Dec 98 | 102.75 | 102.75 | Mar 99 | 102.75 | 102.75 |

Source: Bloomberg

Industrial Metals

| LME (pounds) | Cash | 3 month | 6 month | 12 month |
|--------------|-------|---------|---------|----------|
| Aluminum | 14875 | 14875 | 14875 | 14875 |
| Copper | 1325 | 1325 | 1325 | 1325 |
| Gold | 384 | 384 | 384 | 384 |
| Lead | 5705 | 5705 | 5705 | 5705 |
| Nickel | 5670 | 5670 | 5670 | 5670 |
| Platinum | 820 | 820 | 820 | 820 |
| Palladium | 1065 | 1065 | 1065 | 1065 |
| Silver | 1065 | 1065 | 1065 | 1065 |
| Zinc | 1065 | 1065 | 1065 | 1065 |

Precious Metals

| pm lbs/oz per oz | pm lbs/oz per oz | pm lbs/oz per oz | pm lbs/oz per oz |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Platinum | 820 | 820 | 820 |
| Palladium | 1065 | 1065 | 1065 |
| Silver | 1065 | 1065 | 1065 |
| Gold | 384 | 384 | 384 |

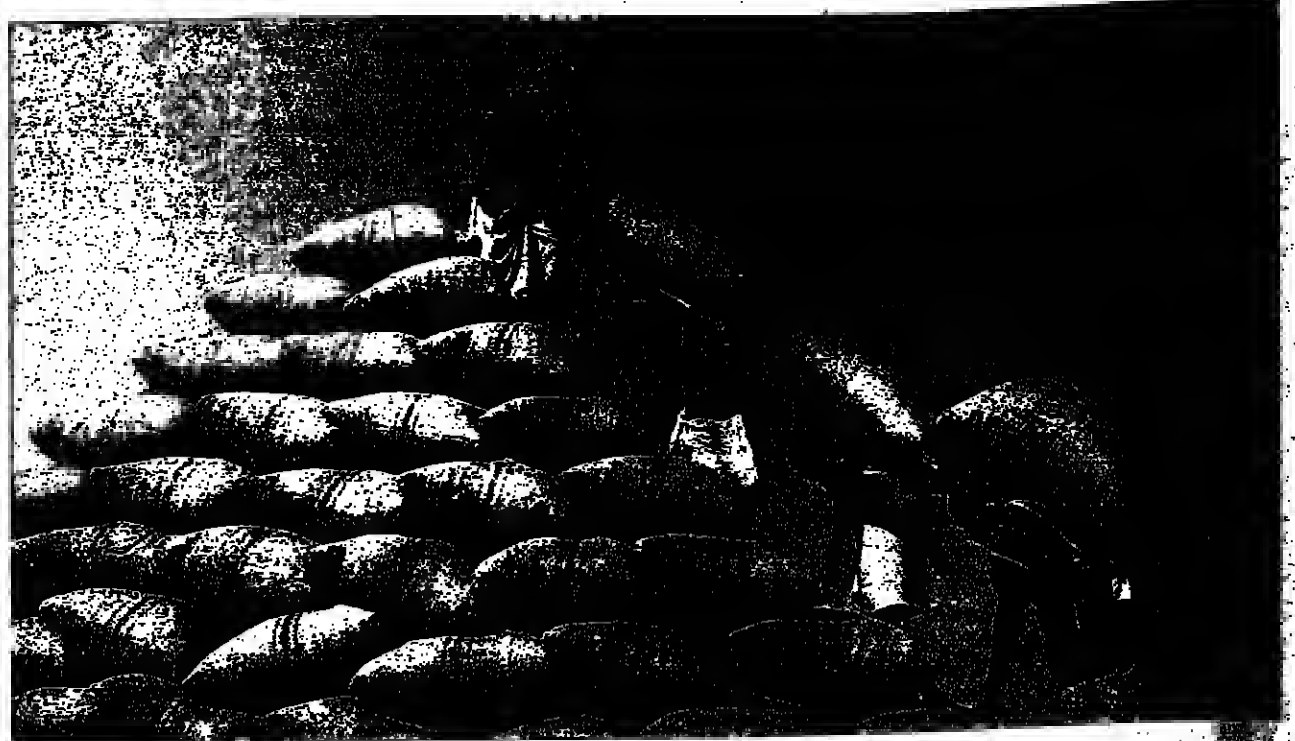
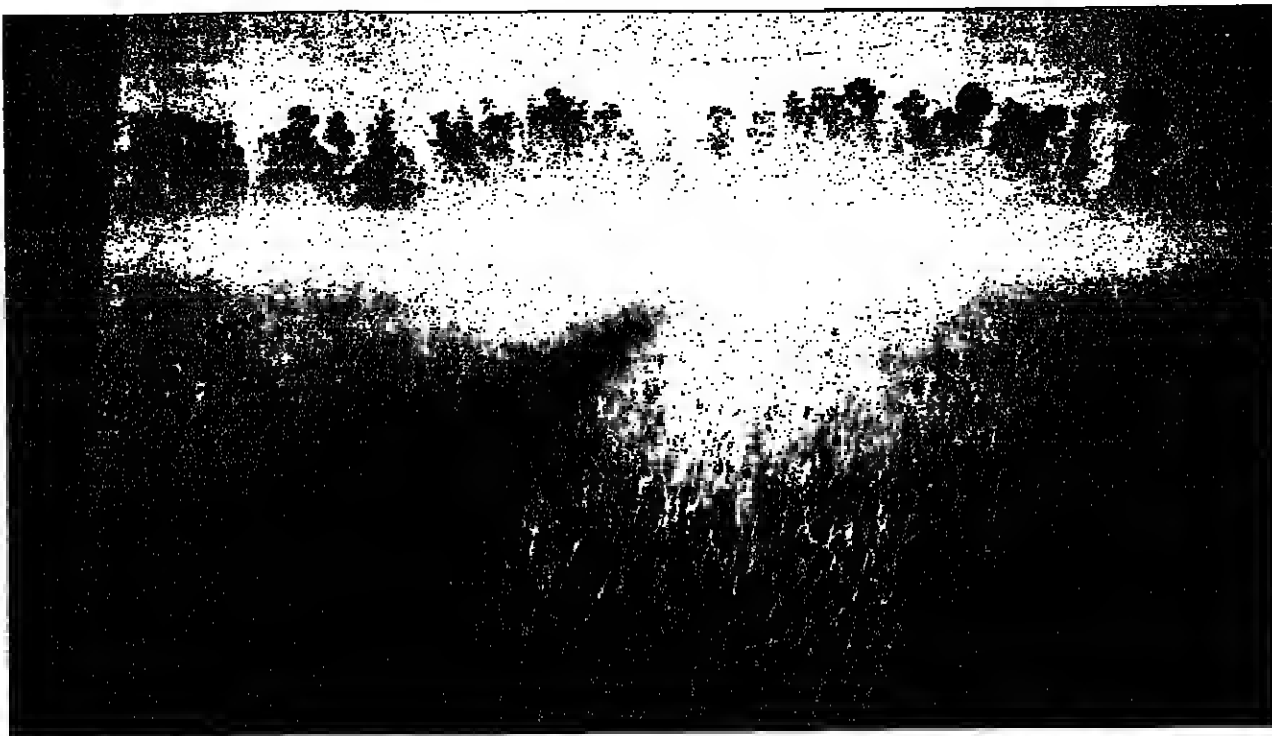
Source: Bloomberg

Agricultural

| Cocoa | Coffee | Barley | Potatoes | Lign Potatoes |
|--------|--------|--------|----------|---------------|
| Mar 98 | 10420 | 10420 | 10420 | 10420 |
| Jun 98 | 10420 | 10420 | 10420 | 10420 |
| Sep 98 | 10420 | 10420 | 10420 | 10420 |
| Dec 98 | 10420 | 10420 | 10420 | 10420 |
| Mar 99 | 10420 | 10420 | 10420 | 10420 |

Source: Bloomberg

Precious rice harvest makes India's winter turn gold



Golden harvest: The moon shines as dawn breaks over a basmati paddy near Karnal, Haryana state (top); Above, freshly milled grains of basmati



Hard labour: Basmati rice is harvested only once a year, and is a difficult crop to grow, giving rise to its status and price. Much of the work is done manually

On the death of his wife, Mumtaz, the Mogul emperor Shah Jahan presented her with the Taj Mahal. While she was still alive his gifts were less elaborate but equally precious and pearly white; he gave her basmati, the prince of rice.

So highly valued is basmati rice that the majority of Indians could only dream of eating it on a regular basis, although the poorest peasant might sacrifice a great deal to

present it at, say, his daughter's wedding. Some 390km north of Mumtaz's tomb, the Taj Mahal in Agra, in the state of Haryana, Sukhwant Singh wades through his golden fields of basmati, shrouded in the dawn mist, checking the paddy before harvest. This area is part of the Indo Gangetic plain, fed, via irrigation on an immense scale, by rivers originating high in the Himalayas.

This is the only place in the world that true basmati is grown and its annual harvest runs from November to early January. The fact that it is only harvested once a year and it is an extremely difficult crop to grow

PHOTOGRAPHS AND WORDS BY TOM PILSTON

gives rise to its status and price at the local *mundis* (markets). Although some large farms are now mechanised much of the crop is grown on small farms where most of the work is done manually. On the road west through the paddy fields, running the gauntlet of pot holes and rice lor-

ries, you constantly see small groups of men and women wielding bundles of rice threshing out the grain in an old drum.

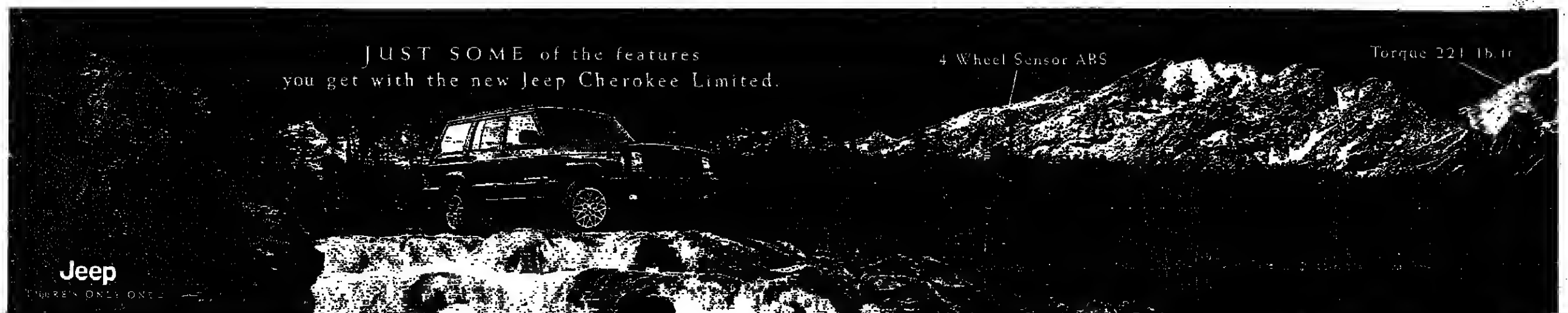
The *mundi* at harvest time is a mass of enthusiastic humanity flowing between mountains of golden husked rice. What at first sight seems chaotic soon adopts a

recognisable form. Workers pile up rice, scooping it with old cooking oil tins and throwing it in graceful arcs to the top of the pile, or *dheri*. The auctioneer moves from one *dheri* to another with a gaggle of buyers hot on his heels sinking up to their ankles in the mounds letting the rice flow through their hands which are dusty and worn from crushing the golden grains.

The sale ends with a flourish as the auctioneer throws a handful high in the air before moving on. From here the basmati goes to the mills. Some of it is fully processed for domestic consumption but

most is exported raw to countries such as Britain, where it has long been appreciated as the perfect accompaniment to an Indian meal.

The only cloud on the horizon other than those brought by the monsoon winds originates in the United States, where farmers are attempting to create basmati or "Texmati". In retaliation, the Indian government is said to be taking legal moves to protect the basmati name. This may not, however, be necessary—one cannot help feeling that Mumtaz would have turned up a noble nose at any young pretender to basmati's throne.



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TIME OFF

TRAVEL, LEISURE & SPORT

Saturday 10 January 1998



In the country of the Maroons, an indomitable band of runaway slaves who found sanctuary in north-east Jamaica

Photograph: J. Henderson/Hutchison Library

Mystery, history and the spirit of survival

In search of bananas, runaway slaves and warriors, Stephen Thorpe ventures into the Maroon country of north-east Jamaica.

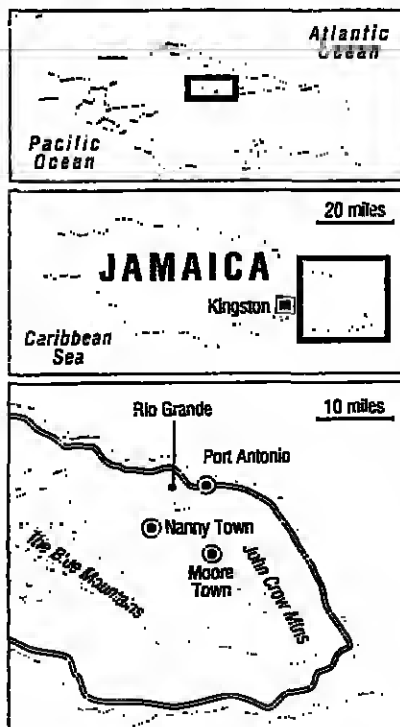
Yellowfin snapper, a chunk of barracuda and a bag of rice would just about see us right, I reckoned, as I boarded the Rio Grande express. This decrepit lorry is the only public transport between the old banana centre of Port Antonio and the lower reaches of an intriguing hidden valley in north-east Jamaica. I was heading for the former stronghold of the Maroons, a formidable band of runaway slaves who found sanctuary at the elbow of the John Crow and Blue Mountain ranges. Provisions may have seemed a priority, but other matters quickly became of more pressing concern.

Our truck was loaded to the gunwales with breezeblocks, building materials for hardy locals looking to establish a more permanent footing in the valley. An old lady scrambled aboard with a pair of goats which settled in beside her. No one spoke as we lurched through down-at-heel settlements,

past the turn-off for a tourist rafting experience and the road grew ever more fissured, teetering just feet from the edge of a canyon dropping sheer into the Rio Grande.

After negotiating a landslip and veering from the gorse past Windsor, my fears began to subside. Yet as we proceeded deeper into Maroon country the landscape became more rugged, framed by the twin mountain masses and by myriad hues of green. An hour later we halted in Moore Town, in fact a village, which straggles uphill along the Wildcane tributary. The place was founded in 1739 following a treaty with the British that granted independence and is still the centre of Maroon life, run semi-autonomously by a committee of captains, majors and a colonel.

Their history is rooted in slavery and revolt. Slaves of the Spanish, the first colonists of Jamaica, were freed and encouraged to harass the British when they arrived in 1655. Small bands of independent Negroes survived in the more inaccessible parts of the interior for more than a century. They were joined periodically by other escapees from new British plantations, systematically slaughtering livestock, raiding fields and



buildings in an effort to undermine the colonists.

The great majority of rebels were Coromantee or Akan speaking slaves from the Gold Coast and Papaws from the West African empires of Dahomey and Ashanti, renowned for their warlike stance, but today's outsider has no need to fear malice or hostility. Visitors are treated with more disdain than anger and, though welcomes are far from effusive, an appreciation of their troubled past goes a long way.

Occasionally, violence will flare up. A gaggle of disaffected youths, conversing in thick patois, strolled by a wayside banana gathering ground, an urchin niftily stuffing a bunch under his torn T-shirt. The owner, a large lady not to be trifled with, spotted the felony and hurled abuse, followed by a handful of gravel. "Me kill you to rass!" she bellowed. It looked for all the world as if she would have – but the scamp was gone.

Nanny, the legendary chieftainess of the Rio Grande area in the early 18th century, exerted a huge influence – originally as a sorcerer or obeah woman, then as an intuitive and fearless warrior. When one English hostage was taken, he found himself

surrounded by a group of hostile women, Nanny's former associates, adorned with necklaces strung with the teeth of white men.

The site of the main fortress at Nanny Town, on a bluff of the Blue Mountain ridge, was excavated 25 years ago but is now barely accessible, rubble foundations reclaimed by the bush. Yet the spirit of the place is still there – and the word is that any European venturing here will die.

Nanny herself was killed by a renegade slave and laid to rest in "Bump" grave at Moore Town; the monument now is sadly neglected, the area being used by schoolchildren as a makeshift cricket pitch. Yet moves are afoot to establish a museum of culture in Moore Town. Maroon tradition still persists – drums are made by hollowing ackee trees, and rope is produced by twining the bark of trumpet trees. The abeng, a cow horn, remains a powerful means of communication across the valleys.

The spirit of the Maroons, of indomitability and ingenuity in adversity, is alive and well at Ambassabeth, a rustic camp perched in stupendous surroundings near the summit ridge of the John Crow mountains. Here Sister Lil presides. She is edu-

cated, well travelled and a fine raconteuse – and has returned to her roots for what she terms "spiritual sustenance and guidance". Tall and straight-backed, dressed in voluminous African style, rich in ochre and gold, she conducted a learned discourse on the marginalisation of the Maroons well into the night. It was a tale of frustration – yet in view of their rich and warlike history and Nanny's legacy, it is unlikely that their heritage will ever be destroyed.

Getting there: Air Jamaica (0181-570 9171) flies four times a week from Heathrow to Kingston. British Airways (0345 222111) flies three times weekly from Gatwick via Kingston to Montego Bay. Discount agents, such as Jetline (0171-360 1111) offer scheduled flights on Air Jamaica for £480 return to Kingston, or charters to Montego Bay for as little as £315 in February (though few seats are available at this price). Many charters also operate as part of package holidays. More information: the Jamaica Tourist Board is part of the High Commission, 1-2 Prince Consort Road, London SW7 2BZ. For brochures, call 0800 445533 (a call-handling agency). For other details, dial 0171-224 0505.

INSIDE: CITY BREAKS St Petersburg/2 OUTDOORS Dog sledding/13 SPORT Tottenham's new man/22 Dalglish's Newcastle/20 RECORD CHASER Eddery on Piggott's trail/15

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48 hours in the life of St Petersburg

Wear a Russian sheepskin hat, slide your hands into a fluffy glove-muff, pull on fur-lined boots and hire a horse-drawn sleigh. Esther Oxford introduces the delights of the former Hero-City of the Soviet Union.

Why go now?

Snow is thick and temperatures are cold, but the romance of a gold-domed, river-broken city muffled by whiteness will still any qualms. Ice-skate on the river Neva; cross-country ski in the parks that surround the golden stables and frozen fountains of Peterhof. Or descend to a basement bar and introduce yourself to a tableful of Russians, for a wade through a mire of talk, vodka and rowdy singing. For those who appreciate ballet and opera, winter is prime season; the Kirov Theatre (now known as the Maryinsky) is closed during the summer.

Beam down

You can fly non-stop to St Petersburg from Gatwick on British Airways (0345 222111) or from Gatwick or Heathrow on Aeroflot (0171-355 2233), for around £500 including tax – or less through discount agents. Cheaper flights, or connections from other UK airports, may be available from discount agents for travel on Austrian Airlines via Vienna, Finnair via Helsinki, KLM via Amsterdam, or SAS via Stockholm or Copenhagen.

You will, however, need a Russian visa – which is, frustratingly, even more troublesome to get now than it was in the days of the USSR. An inclusive package can minimise the bureaucratic nightmare that the visa application entails. Intourist (0171-538 5902) has a three-night short break to St Petersburg, with departures starting on 20 February, including flights and four-star accommodation, for £390 (plus £25 visa fee). Scantours (0171-839 2927) offers a 10-day combination of Turkey, Helsinki and St Petersburg, with three nights in Russia, for £865.

If you are not on an organised tour, arriving at Pulkovo airport can be challenging; your first brush with the Mafia could be one of the less salubrious taxi drivers here, who try to coerce custom from new arrivals. Ignore them, change some cash into roubles, and take one of the fast minibuses or a regular city bus to Moskovskaya metro station, where you plug into the excellent underground railway.

Get your bearings

Slicing the city in half is the river Neva. North of the river is Petrograd, home to the Peter and Paul Fortress, the city zoo, a mosque (inspired by the mausoleum of Tamerlane in Samarkand), the battleship *Aurora* (an icon of the Russian Revolution) and the Museum of Russian Political History. Leafy trees adorn the residential areas; cafés, markets and antique shops break up the apartment blocks and parkland.

The south side of the river Neva hosts the backbone of the city – Nevsky Prospekt – and a high concentration of the city's sites, including the Winter Palace, the Bronze Horseman (inspirational for Pushkin's poem), the Hermitage, the Russian Museum, the city's three major cathedrals, and the Summer Palace and its gardens.

Check in

The Grand Hotel Europe (275 2001), looking it over Nevsky Prospekt, is the most



A gold-domed, river-broken city – well worth the battle with post-Soviet bureaucracy

Photograph: Ellen Rooney/Robert Harding Picture Library

sumptuous (and expensive) hotel in St Petersburg. It was completed in 1875, and given a face-lift by the Art Nouveau architect Fyodor Lidval, before being refurbished again in the late Eighties by a Swedish-Russian joint venture. Security is tight: visitors are questioned by security guards and metal detectors create an impression of a fortress. But once you are inside, the opulence is seductive (British newspapers, starched tablecloths) although the toilets (indeed, all the plumbing) could do with yet another overhaul.

The Astoria (210 5010), a short walk from Nevsky Prospekt, is a beautiful building with startling views of St Isaac's Cathedral. The journalist John Reed stayed at the hotel during the 1917 Revolution, and later wrote his famous account, *Ten Days that Shook the World*. The service is abysmal (expect to wait a good half hour for a beer) and the hotel is home to a casino – so garish New Russian money is in much abundance.

The *Peterhof* (325 8888), a cruise ship which serves as a hotel, is a cheaper option. The rooms are cabins – and small – but the furnishings are comfortable and the service is excellent. The ship is moored near the Tichkov bridge, a short walk from Nevsky Prospekt.

Take a ride

If the ice breaks, dress up in those banished fox furs, buy a bottle of champagne and a jar of caviar, and hire a water-taxi to guide you along St Petersburg's network of rivers and canals. The afternoon light is exquisite; open fires in empty metal drums punctuate the landscape and sky. Call 230 7747 to book.

Alternatively, hire a helicopter for a city overview. Fifteen-minute trips from the Peter and Paul Fortress start at £12 per person (104 1676 or 315 3458). Or take a horse-drawn sleigh-ride from the Prostern Equestrian Centre on Krestovsky Island (230 7875 or 230 7872).

Take a hike

A walk up Nevsky Prospekt to the river Neva will take you through the spectacular Palace Square, scene of the 1905 Revolution, and past the Hermitage (also known as the Winter Palace), a magnificent example of Baroque architecture and home to what is arguably the world's most impressive art collection.

Cross the bridge on to Vasilevsky Island, passing a Guinness bar and the university grounds. The golden spire of Peter and Paul Fortress will be on one side of the Neva;

the sea-blue walls of the Hermitage on the other. Cross the second bridge, stroll along the river's edge, and the enormous walls of the fortress (once known as the "Russian Bastille") will soon give way to the entrance.

The Peter and Paul Fortress is the city's oldest building, and the burial site of every czar since Peter the Great (with the exception of Nicholas II). Peter imprisoned (and later executed) his son Alexis in the fortress. Dostoyevsky, Gorky and Lenin's brother are other famous prisoners.

Outside the cobbled yards, church and museum buildings, the self-styled "wallnuts" will entertain. These are the die-hard swimmers who take a daily dip in the Neva all year round. During winter they pierce holes in the ice.

Alternatively you can follow the footsteps of the fictional murderer Rodion Raskolnikov, of *Crime and Punishment*, in a guided walking-tour of Dostoyevsky's St Petersburg. Prices start at \$10 a person but are open to negotiation, especially in winter (164 6850).

Lunch on the run

If you are walking back from the Peter and Paul Fortress, take a right on to Naberezh-

naya Reki Moika, from Nevsky Prospekt, stroll along beside the canal for a couple of blocks, and you will find The Idiot café (named after Dostoyevsky's novel).

This is a winding rabbit-warren of sofa-filled rooms and cosy corners. The cappuccinos are large and creamy and the food is distinctly Russian: *blini* and *pelmeni* (meat pies), beet and potato salad. The café doubles as a used-books store, stocking what appears to be the city's only selection of English language books. Chess is a popular pastime, and it is acceptable to start chucking back the vodkas any time before lunch.

Cultural afternoon

The Hermitage museum houses a three-million-piece collection of works of art, not all of which are on display. It is said that it would take nine years to look at every item. There are rooms devoted to Rembrandt, Picasso and Matisse – not to mention fabulous treasures from Asia.

Between 1697 and 1852 only royalty and their guests could enter the Hermitage; thereafter, "decent citizens" were occasionally admitted. It was only after the 1917 Revolution that ordinary people were allowed in.

Window shopping

Samovars, black lacquer boxes, nesting matryoshka dolls, fur hats, busts of Lenin and red Soviet flags are all easily obtained in hotel shops (fantastically over-priced) and on Nevsky Prospekt – home to the best boutiques and department stores (look for Passage) – as well as Dom Knigi, the city's most famous bookstore (excellent for art books and sheet music).

Demure dinner

Dvorskoye Gnezdo serves oysters, caviar and other such delicacies – exquisitely prepared. The restaurant is located in the tea pavilion of the Yusupovsky Palace, formerly the home of one of the city's richest families. It was also the setting for the murder of the mad Siberian monk Rasputin – by stabbing, drowning and poisoning. Reservations essential; credit cards accepted (312 3205).

Early hours

The Jazz Club (164 8565) plays jazz from 8pm. Tunnel (233 2562) is a Bohemian nightclub in a former Soviet bomb-shelter; the DJ plays progressive, house and/or techno music. For those who like spectacle, try the Zoopark, a small venue right in the centre of the city zoo. The sounds of not-too-loud rock and bards echo round the pathetic bear cages and monkey circus, softly, softly, so as not to wake the animals. The entrance is on Kronverksky Prospekt. For an all-night ice-skating disco, try the Yubileyny Sports Palace (238 4049), also on the Petrograd side of the Neva.

Sunday morning: go to church

Trinity cathedral, a modest building in Neoclassical style, nestles within the walls of the Alexander Nevsky Monastery, at the east end of Nevsky Prospekt. On Sundays the cathedral heaves with worshippers lighting candles, kissing icons and chanting, while its choir is said to be one of St Petersburg's best.

Bracing brunch

The Europa restaurant in the Grand Hotel Europe hosts a Sunday jazz brunch – champagne, delicatessen, fresh cheeses and fish, exquisite pastries arranged in piles the size of small mountains – for US\$45 (£28). Call 329 6000 to make a reservation.

A walk in the park

The Summer Gardens, between Troitsky and Liteiny bridges, were built on the orders of Peter the Great and remain one of the city's most beloved (and most central) sights. Those who have enjoyed kicking up snow, brushing past icicles and stroking frozen statues include the writers Alexander Pushkin and Nikolai Gogol, and the composer Pyotr Tchaikovsky.

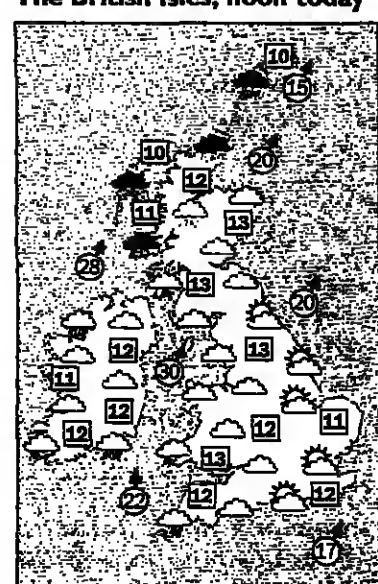
Ice on the cake

Try a real Russian *banya*. Bring a towel and shampoo and buy a *venik* (a leafy bunch of birch twigs, available at the paybooth) for the steam room. Alternate between the cold plunge pool, hot steam cavern, tea area and beauty treatment room, where salt is rubbed into the body to encourage sweating, and honey is smoothed on to moisture.

Mytinskii Bani (271 7119) is the only wood-stoked *banya* still operating in town; or, if you want to try the Russian tradition of leaping through the ice in a freezing lake, try the *banya* at Bolshaya Ozyomaya (553 2396). This hathhouse is open 24 hours a day and has sauna, Russian *parika*, pool, gym and massage.

WEATHER

The British Isles, noon today



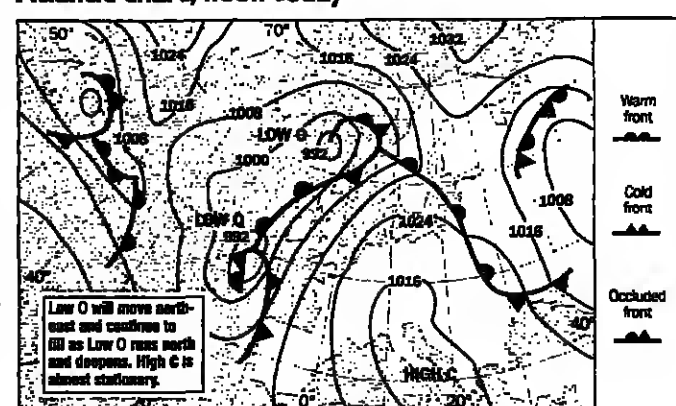
most recent available figures at noon local time. c: cloudy; l: light; h: heavy; m: mist; o: overcast; s: sunny; b: thunder

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------|-----------|-------|-------------|-------|------------|-------|
| Aberdeen | 12 54 | Cardiff | 12 54 | Liverpool | 14 57 | Stirling | 18 55 |
| Anglosey | 12 54 | Exeter | 13 55 | Manchester | 12 55 | Stroud | 13 55 |
| Ayr | 12 54 | Glasgow | 11 52 | Nottingham | 12 55 | Swansea | 13 55 |
| Belfast | 13 55 | Leeds | 11 52 | Sheffield | 13 55 | Torquay | 13 55 |
| Birmingham | 18 55 | Liverpool | 12 54 | Southampton | 14 57 | Walsley | 13 55 |
| Blackpool | 12 54 | London | 18 55 | Southend | 13 55 | Warrington | 13 55 |
| Bournemouth | 13 55 | Edinburgh | 11 52 | St Andrews | 13 55 | Widnes | 13 55 |
| Brighton | 11 52 | Glasgow | 13 55 | Stirling | 13 55 | Wrexham | 13 55 |
| Bristol | 12 54 | Sheffield | 12 54 | Torquay | 13 55 | | |

General summary and outlook

Northern Ireland and northern and western Scotland will have rain at first, but this will become confined to north-west Scotland. Eastern Scotland will have a mostly dry day with some bright periods, especially along the coast. Wales and western parts of England will have rather a lot of cloud, just a few bright spells and some coastal drizzle. The best of the day's weather will be in southern and eastern England where there should be some sunny spells. The whole country will be very mild. Tomorrow will be another mild day with the best of the bright or sunny spells in southern and eastern England. Western Scotland and Northern Ireland will have patchy rain at first, and this rain will edge erratically south-eastwards through the day, affecting some central regions before evening. Monday and Tuesday will be a little less mild with sunny spells and showers in the north and west, but still a fair amount of dry weather in the east.

Atlantic chart, noon today



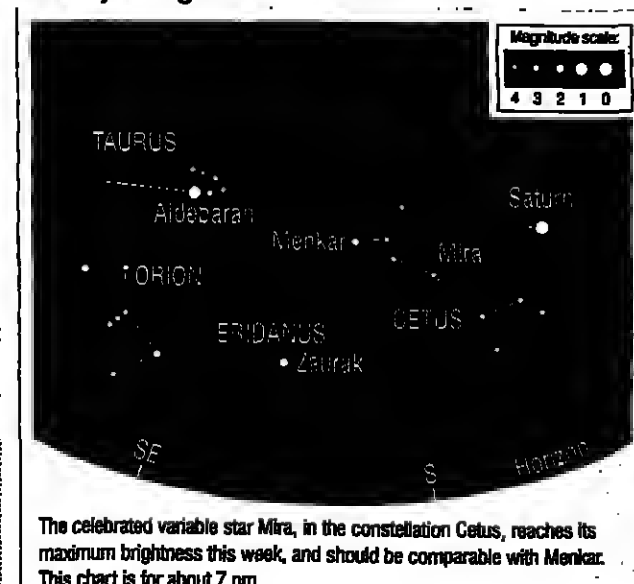
World weather: most recent available figures at noon local time

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-------|-----------|-------|-------------|-------|
| Athens | 14 57 | Frankfurt | 6 46 | New York | 18 51 |
| Bombay | 18 54 | Geneva | 11 52 | Osaka | 13 55 |
| Buenos Aires | 28 78 | Hamburg | 8 46 | Paris | 15 56 |
| Calcutta | 14 57 | London | 18 55 | Rome | 12 54 |
| Cairo | 11 52 | Madrid | 11 52 | Stockholm | 14 57 |
| Chongqing | 10 01 | Moscow | 11 52 | Switzerland | 14 57 |
| Copenhagen | 10 01 | Osaka | 13 55 | Taipei | 23 73 |
| Dhaka | 10 01 | Seoul | 13 55 | Tokyo | 23 73 |
| Hong Kong | 10 01 | Singapore | 13 55 | Winnipeg | 14 57 |
| London | 18 55 | Taipei | 13 55 | Zurich | 14 57 |
| Los Angeles | 18 55 | Winnipeg | 14 57 | | |
| Manila | 18 55 | Zurich | 14 57 | | |
| Moscow | 11 52 | | | | |
| Paris | 15 56 | | | | |
| Rome | 12 54 | | | | |
| Stockholm | 14 57 | | | | |
| Switzerland | 14 57 | | | | |
| Taipei | 23 73 | | | | |
| Tokyo | 23 73 | | | | |
| Winnipeg | 14 57 | | | | |
| Zurich | 14 57 | | | | |

AA Roadwatch

London, A1 between Mill Hill Circus and Finsbury Circus. Roadworks and restrictions. Until May 31.
London A3211 Blackfriars Underpass. Contrailow. Until April 15.
Buckinghamshire, M40 J14-15. Roadworks and restrictions. Until March 9.
Kent M2 J5-7. Bridge maintenance & restrictions. Until March 9.
Bristol M5 J18-19. Major roadworks on Avonmouth Bridge. Until Jan 99.
Cornwall, A38 Bodmin Parkway Station turning. Contrailow. Until June 1.
Gloucestershire, M5 J9 Tewkesbury. Contrailow. Until Jan 23.
Somerset, M5 J22-23. Major roadworks & contrailow. Until March 31.
Cambs, A1 Alconbury to Haddon. Construction work. Until December 31 1998.
Suffolk A12 between Kessingland and Wrentham. Restrictions until March 3.
Derbyshire, A38 South Normanton. Major roadworks. Until March 1.
Leicestershire, M1 J24. Northbound exit slip closed. Use J23A. Until April 13.
Greater Manchester, A56 Old Trafford. Roadworks and restrictions. Until Jan 19.
Merseyside, A57, Knowsley. Roadworks at M57 junction. Until Dec 31.
North Yorks, A1 Airedale to Garforth. Roadworks until August 1.

The sky at night



The celebrated variable star Mira, in the constellation Cetus, reaches its maximum brightness this week, and should be comparable with Menkar. This chart is for about 7 pm.

To the west of Taurus and rather low over the horizon for UK observers basks Cetus, the Whale. In this rather inconspicuous constellation, the Dutch astronomer David Fabricius made the first noted discovery of a variable star, a star that came to be known as Mira – the wonderful one. This week, you can spot Mira as Fabricius did in 1596, at roughly third magnitude and comparable with the prime star in Cetus, Menkar. Over the next seven months, its brightness to our eyes will fade by around magnitudes, down to well below the limit of naked-eye visibility. By next December, it will once again return to its most brilliant state. Mira is a red giant star that physically pulses in and out like a very slowly beating heart. Its change in visible brightness is only half its story, though. Were our eyes sensitive to infra-red radiation, the form in which it emits most of its energy, we would perceive much less of a change.

Jacqueline Mitton

Where
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Lake Baikal, is
visited by tourists
of Buddhist
shamanist
and churches of
old believers
the republic of
a unique corner
book writes

REEN CHA

RED CHAN

of the venues for
England's cricket Tests
West
has just been
to the Foreign
the danger list

Where Lenin meets Buddha

The 17th-century city of Ulan Ude, straddling the trans-Siberian railway east of Lake Baikal, is rarely visited by tourists. Yet a mix of Buddhist monasteries, shamanist shrines and churches of Orthodox old believers makes the republic of Buryatia a unique corner of Russia, writes Lucy Jones.

There isn't much choice of travel when you decide your destination is Ulan Ude, the capital of Buryatia. I travelled on the trans-Siberian railway, squeezed into a compartment with two enormous, wedding-bound sisters and an acrobat from Vladivostok. But one stop before reaching Buryatia the carriage suddenly emptied.

My new companions were Buryat traders returning from China, having bought clothes to sell. Instead of vases of hyacinths and boxes of radishes, the aisle was now filled with canvas bags bulging with clothes.

Being a gateway to the east, Ulan Ude was a commercial hub before Stalin cut it off from the world. The city owes much of its graceful architecture to the merchants who traded here in the 19th century, and it is currently reclaiming its mercantile past in today's commodities of ghetto-blasters and flip-flops. But it's not just Ulan Ude's hustle as a trading-post

that makes it more Asian than Russia. The Buryats are Buddhists and, after years of persecution, are flocking to the monasteries. Since 1991, more than 30 monasteries, known as *datsan*, have been built from locally donated money.

The Ivolginsk *datsan*, set against indigo mountains, is the focal point of the revival – and reason enough to visit this vast land. Sitting on the sandalwood steps of a temple, watching monks hurry by while prayer wheels creaked in the breeze, I found it almost impossible to believe that I was in Russia.

In the morning, monks chant Tibetan mantras in the vividly-decorated main temple, crammed full of statues of Buddha, pictures of the Dalai Lama, tantric sculptures and musical instruments. Some of the monks then retire to the wooden houses clustered around the *datsan* to offer health horoscopes, astrology readings and herbal medicine, for "as much as you can afford". Soon though, the cash tills will be ringing. A large Buddhist complex in the centre of Ulan Ude, providing Buddhist medicine, philosophy courses and Buddhist instruction, is nearing completion; it will attract visitors from Europe to this oasis of peaceful living.

But then, Buryatia has always been a refuge for outsiders. The Old Believers, rebels of the Russian Orthodox Church, fled here in the 17th century to escape persecution.

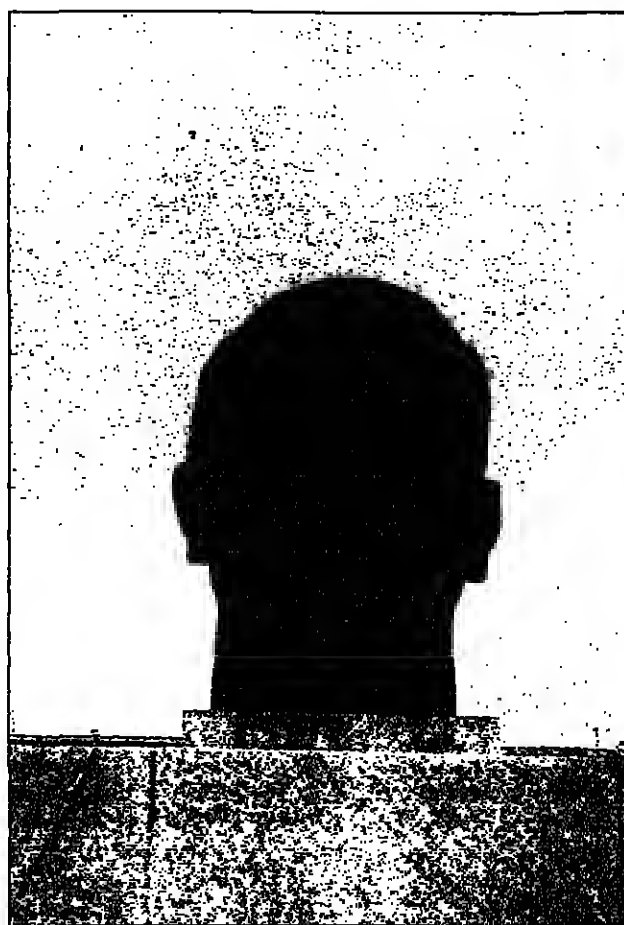
It is still possible to see their brightly painted homes, and the houses of the White Army officials for whom the city was a base while they fought the Bolsheviks during the Revolution. All this coexists with the indigenous shamanist sacred shrines – ancient rocks, with carvings of abominable faces to scare away evil spirits.

The timid visitor could do with some spiritual help. The hotel industry in Buryatia has taken on market reforms only in the price department. Aggressive security guards demand to know where you are going as you head up to your £40-a-night room, while a little old lady sops a wet and dirty rag around in the name of cleaning. At first I stayed in the Hotel Odon, near the railway station, where the sachet of shower gel and towel seemed somewhat superfluous given that there was no hot water, shower or toilet seat. Drug-dealing in the foyer provided regular enter-

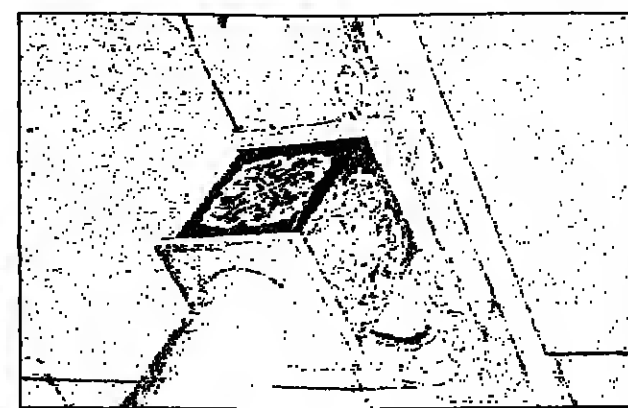
tainment. I switched to one of the hotels around the central square, where the sex shop in the entrance seemed a comparatively minor inconvenience.

Buryatia is distinct from the rest of Russia, yet the city is home to the world's largest sculpture of Lenin's head, towering precariously over the three-storey municipal buildings in the main square. Made for a Canadian exhibition in 1972, it ended up in Ulan Ude when nobody else wanted it. It now has supports coming out of Lenin's ears, because it the statue was in danger of toppling over. Perhaps the citizens of Copenhagen, where the cranium of the Little Mermaid was stolen this week, could buy it.

A train ticket from Moscow to Peking, with a stop in Ulan Ude, costs £420 including two nights' accommodation in both Moscow and Ulan Ude, visa and transfers through The Russia Experience (0181-566 8846).



Looming large: the world's largest Lenin presides precariously over the Buryat capital, where Buddhist imagery is making a comeback. Photographs: Lucy Jones



GREEN CHANNEL

Get rich quick? That depends on which side of the touristic divide you stand. Sue Wheat does the sums

The first package tour abroad can probably be attributed to Thomas Cook's first group trip to Paris in 1855. Package holidays really took off in the 1950s, when travel companies started putting spare warplanes into action. The price of travel fell to a level where the masses could start holidaying to more exotic locations. This year, 14.5 million of us are likely to take a package holidaymakers. But who gets what from a package tour financially? Research by Leeds Development Education Centre in its award-winning Geography pack, *The Final Frontier*, gives the example of Kenya and shows that a maximum of around 40p out of every pound stays in the country.

This includes 23p to the hotel chain (assuming it is Kenyan-owned), 8p to the safari company (again, as long as it is Kenyan-owned) and 9p to the government. The sending country (for instance the UK) wins the economic equation with 20p out of every pound going to the tour operator and 40p going to the airline. The amount leaving Kenya is then bumped up further when imports are paid for (10p out of every pound) and foreign debt payments are made (15p). This takes the total fleeing the country at 85p and 15p staying in Kenya. As many tour operators use foreign owned hotels and foreign-owned safari companies, the benefits to the destination economy may be reduced even further especially if the holiday is all-inclusive.

The Final Frontier is available from Leeds DEC (0113-278 4030). It is also available on CD-ROM.

RED CHANNEL

One of the venues for England's cricket Tests against the West Indies has just been added to the Foreign Office danger list.

"We advise against all but essential travel to Guyana. The situation is tense and volatile following the General Elections on 15 December. Some protest demonstrations have led to violence. Visitors who must travel should avoid meetings and demonstrations and should keep off the streets of Georgetown [where the Test will take place]. "Violent crime remains a problem, particularly in Georgetown. Do not walk alone at night, especially in the area of Stabroek Market and downtown Georgetown. Take

additional precautions during daylight hours; exercise constant vigilance, do not dress ostentatiously, do not carry valuable, large quantities of money, video cameras, etc. House burglary (which is often accompanied by violence), and theft from cars are also major problems. "Drug trafficking in Guyana is becoming a major problem. Visitors caught trafficking drugs face long prison sentences and very heavy fines. Pack all your luggage yourself and do not carry any items that do not belong to you. "Typhoid is still present in Guyana. Malaria is prevalent in all areas outside Georgetown."

Foreign Office Travel Advice is displayed in BBC2 (Cee-fax) p470 or call 0171-238 4503

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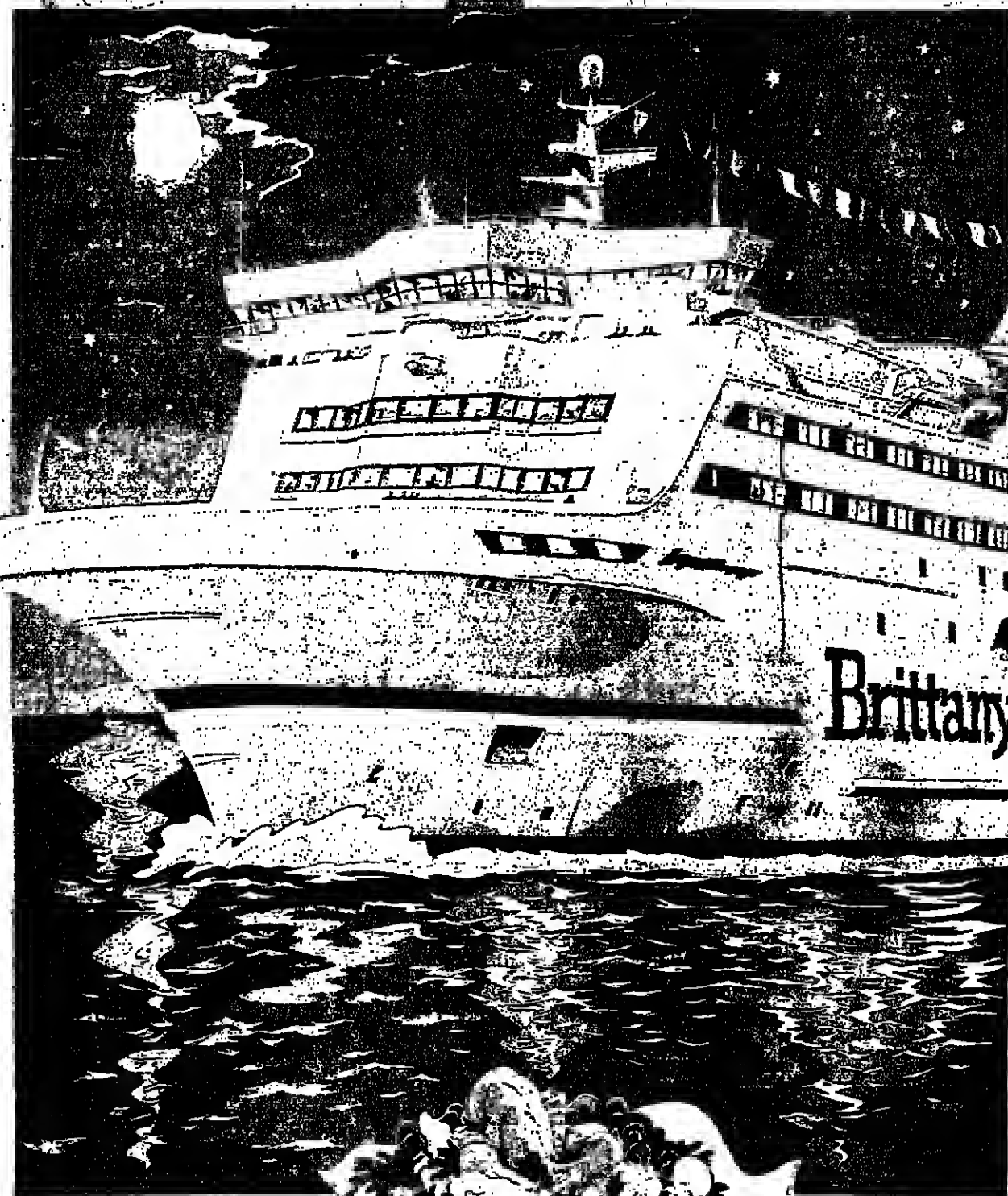
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SIMON CALDER

If you were on Freddie Laker's flight to Fort Lauderdale on Christmas Eve, I hope you reached your destination before 25 December. I witnessed the unfortunate DC-10 being towed back to the stand at Gatwick - not the best omen for flights during the festive season. I, by the way, was aboard the delayed Air 2000 flight to Banjul that overtook you. At least I got to Africa on the right day. But if you plan to fly anywhere in the next 12 months, you may wish to take heed of my annual aviation survey - and avoid Gatwick.

To maximise the chances of arriving on time, this one-traveller survey suggests, fly scheduled from Stansted or Glasgow. And for a flight arriving ahead of time, try a scheduled Monarch service. Curiously, my worst flying delays last year were on Monarch charters.

The Civil Aviation Authority publishes its own punctuality survey with a rather larger sample size, but it has the disadvantage of regarding a flight that operates up to 14 minutes late as being "on time".

Here's how mine works. During 1997 I recorded the punctuality of all the 80 flights I took. For an airline to be included required at least two flights to have been flown, a clause intended to exclude one-off calamities. Airlines that slipped through the net because of this include Aerocaribbean and Cubana (both within Cuba, and both two hours late). Most galling was a Ryanair flight from Dublin to Stansted. I paid £25 extra to travel on an earlier flight, which then somehow contrived to arrive later than the following service.

The 10 charters I took incurred a mean delay of 45 minutes. The remaining flights were scheduled, and were, on average, 13 minutes late.

Based on a dozen flights, British Airways is bang on the 13-minute average. The company says it is spending £55m to improve its punctuality: short-haul crews are reporting for duty 10 minutes earlier, so boarding can begin sooner. Aer Lingus, Airtroups, British Midland and United performed slightly better than BA, while Britannia, EasyJet and KLM were rather tardier.

The hold-ups started getting tedious with LOT Polish Airlines and THY Turkish Airlines, both with an average delay of 40 minutes. Bottom of the barrel was the charter operation of Monarch, which extended a round trip to Cuba by two hours in each direction. Yet Monarch - in its scheduled role - grabs the punctuality award for being the only airline to arrive consistently ahead of time. (Monarch also has the best in-flight service on an international flight: the best on a domestic flight goes to Aerocalifornia, a Mexican operation on the Los Mochis to Tijuana route.)

How, though, do flights ever arrive early? One reason, particularly on North Atlantic routes, is the absence of a headwind (going west) or the presence of a stronger-than-usual tailwind (going east). But a much more common explanation is schedule padding - whereby airlines exaggerate the length of a journey in order to allow for possible delays on the ground.

Take Gatwick to Amsterdam. The flight time for the 200 miles should be no more than 40 minutes. But British Airways allows exactly twice as long, in case of congestion on Gatwick's single runway or air traffic control hold-ups.

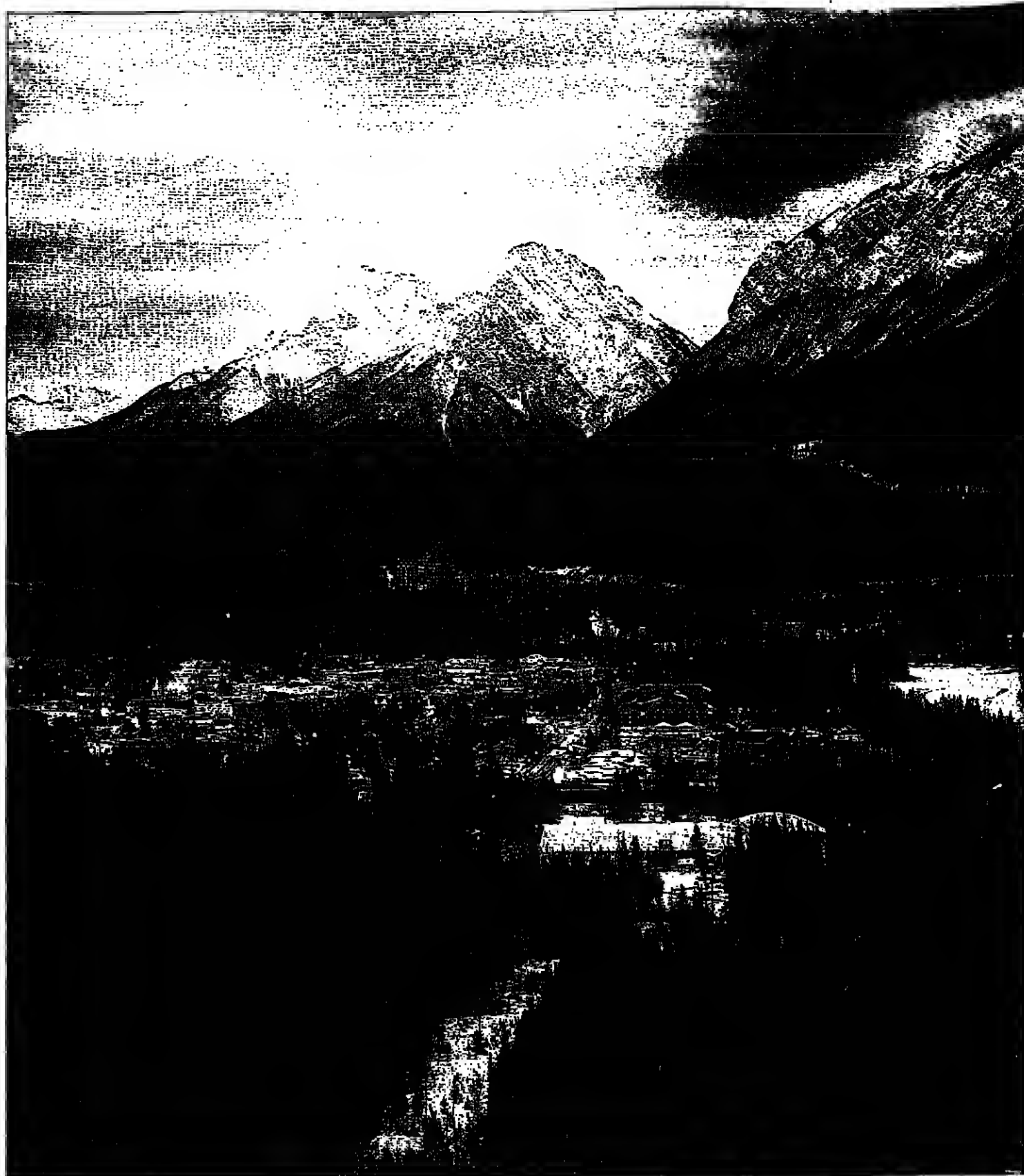
Poor old Gatwick is easily the slooziest airport in Britain, at least when I show up. Departures from the Sussex airport arrived at their destinations an average of 39 minutes late. From Britain's busiest airport, Heathrow, the usual hold-up was 10 minutes - the same as Manchester and Edinburgh. Flights from Luton, which has suddenly found itself to be Britain's low-fare hub, rated a 13-minute delay, while Glasgow and Stansted were perfectly punctual.

Honourable mentions for Air UK, Iberia, Mexicana, Southwest and TAP Air Portugal, all of which kept to time. Iberia was way in front, with an arrival time 15 minutes ahead of schedule on two flights, until a Gatwick-Madrid flight a month ago which was half an hour late. On this particular flight - as with most of the other tardy take-offs - no explanation nor apology was forthcoming. The only pilot who endeavoured to make up a delay was the KLM captain of an hour-late flight from Amsterdam to Chicago, who explained he had taken on extra fuel so that he could fly faster than usual.

Satisfaction with an on-time arrival can be thwarted if your bag has flown elsewhere. Most of the time I travel only with hand luggage, to minimise the chances of my possessions going to LOS (Lagos) while I'm waiting in LAX (Los Angeles). Twice last year my baggage has wandered off on its own: on Aer Lingus from Heathrow, and Britannia from Tenerife. In my first flight of this year, Air 2000 conflated a half-hour delay back into Gatwick with luggage delivery so slow that the bags did not arrive until the following day.

Happy flying in 1998 - or, if you're flying charter from Gatwick, happy departure lounging.

Unless you move quickly, one airline you won't be flying with is Laker Airways. Sir Freddie's second bash at the transatlantic market has proved ineffective, and next Thursday's flight will be the last. Unlike the original Laker Airways collapse in 1982, all customers have got their money back in good time. The airline says this is just a temporary suspension, but I fear it's the last we'll see of the man who did so much to break the aviation monopoly in the Seventies. Without Sir Freddie, those 80 flights would have cost much more.



Deep freeze: at the smart Canadian resort of Banff temperatures can plummet to -30C
Photograph: Rob Cousins/RHPL

Fighting the frost in Canada

'Wrapping up warm' took on new meaning for Nicola Barranger when she set off down the slopes of the Canadian Rockies at Banff.

The Airtroups brochure is upbeat about skiing in North America: "Thermals and layers of clothing are a must, as life on the mountains can become extremely cold - but then again", it chirrups cheerfully, "that's why the skiing terrain is so thrilling and why the season lasts for a good six months of the year!"

If the Canadians say it is cold, it's really cold. When you wake up on the first morning of a ski holiday to a "high" of -30C, you need to speak Polar Bear to convey just how cold that feels. The English language just does not have the vocabulary.

Of course it is freezing. That happened 30 degrees ago. Even the chicken safely in the freezer at home is 12 degrees warmer. However, in the Rockies the air is very dry, so it feels almost bearable.

We had come to the smart Canadian resort of Banff to ski, and that was precisely what we intended to do. There was no option but to acclimatise as quickly as possible - and here speaks a sofie who has been known to wear Damart in April.

First of all, listen to the locals. They should dispel all those old myths such as "long johns are for cissies". In weather like this you are talking double layers of everything, even if that gives you more than a passing resemblance to the Michelin man.

As a naive Brit stepping out for her initial experience of arctic conditions, my first mistake was to forget to cover every area of exposed skin. Suddenly my face began tightening up, and the inside of my nose felt decidedly prickly. As I blinked, I felt the hoar-frost forming on my eyelashes. A beard may protect a man's face, but can appear quite revolting to fellow skiers when frost and icicles form below the nose: very Raulph Fiennes. Some skiers wear black face masks, straight from the set of *The Man in the Iron Mask*. However, once you have got over a mild attack of claustrophobia, they are highly effective. I preferred to see how many scarves I could wrap over my face and into my goggles.

Disposable hand-warmers are worth their weight in lift passes. Available in almost all ski shops, these are small sachets

that magically give off heat for about seven hours - more than enough for a day's skiing. I was amazed to see a number of skiers coming in from the cold and pulling off their gloves, obviously in absolute agony as they rubbed on to their fingers. It seems that not every skier knows that mittens offer far more protection from the cold than gloves, which isolate the fingers whatever warmth remains in each finger cannot be passed on to the next.

At a time when celebrities are perishing on the slopes of the Rockies at a frightening rate, it is worth remembering that, in these conditions frostbite is a real problem. One person in our group suffered frostbite after he lost feeling in his big toe, and was more interested in exploring the back bowls than in remembering to wiggle his toes every so often. What he did not realise was how dangerous frostbite can be.

The Canadians preach "buddy skiing". It is best, they say, to ski in twos. That way each skier can look out for signs of facial "frost nip" in the other. Patches of skin go pale and waxy in appearance - a sort of deathly white, since dying is precisely what is in danger of happening to the tissue. This, the first sign of frostbite, often appears on exposed areas such as ears, nose, chin and cheeks. In severe cases, unless you warm up the affected area, gangrene can set in.

One of the many joys of skiing is the thrill of flying down pisted slopes. No such thrill in these conditions, as even a slight wind chill becomes extremely painful. However, we found that doing the odd black run at least kept the heart pumping, the blood circulating and the toes warm(ish). Bear in mind, however, that you may not be properly warmed up - which in itself can be dangerous.

Curiously, the lure of a warm mountain lodge with excellent hot chocolate proved irresistible after only two or three runs. After all, we remembered, we were on a holiday, not an endurance test.

The favourable exchange rate against the Canadian dollar has again meant that British bookings are up on last year. If you are unlucky enough to catch a "cold snap", do not despair, as these temperatures are uncommon for more than a few days. In the meantime, accept the challenge. You will enjoy perfect snow on deserted pistes, and a warm welcome from all the lift attendants.

However, skiing is not all downhill. Skiing cross-country is a superb and underrated alternative. Even in the most severe temperatures, you are guaranteed to keep warm. Do not be put off by moaners who suggest that it is too much like hard work. Cross-country skiing is a secret well kept by those wanting to escape the crowds and hi-tech of downhill. You will be pleasantly warm and alone on the trail, and in Canadian parks you may be rewarded by the sight of plenty of wildlife, including elk, moose and maybe the odd porcupine. When your eyelashes start to freeze up, you can clear them by squeezing your eyes tight shut, allowing the warmth of your face to melt the frost. You may seem to age about 50 years as your eyebrows whiten, but it makes for a great photo.

Skating and snowshoeing are also excellent "keep warm" activities. And if all that seems too much like an endurance test, then think of all the money you will save on the lift passes.

Afterwards, go and indulge in the nearest hot tub, and line up a few hot chocolates laced with rum. As the Canadians say, "Keep warm."

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TERMS AND C...

'You are old, Father William' – 100 years old, in fact

Charles Dodgson, better known as Lewis Carroll, the author, mathematician, pioneer photographer and perpetual puzzler, died 100 years ago on 14 January. With preparations under way for a commemorative wreath-laying ceremony at 3pm tomorrow at Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, Sally Varlow offers a centenary alphabet of places, people and events linked with Carroll's work.

Alice's Adventures Underground, the original manuscript version, written and illustrated for Alice Liddell, is one of the British Library's top 10 treasures on permanent display, currently at the British Museum, Great Russell Street, London (0171-412 7513).

Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, London, has an exhibition, *Alice – The Wonderful World of Lewis Carroll*, 2 April-25 June (0181-983 5200).

Croft-on-Tees, North Yorkshire, holds a Centenary service on 11 January, in Carroll's father's church. St Peter's. On 3-5 July celebrations include an exhibition, teas in the rectory garden and performances of "Jabberwocky" at nearby Clervaux Castle. (Darlington Tourist Information Centre 01325 382 698).

Daresbury, near Chester, has a centenary lunch on 14 January at Daresbury Park Hotel. (Details: Kenneth Oultram, Daresbury Lewis Carroll Society office hours only, 01606 891303). All Saints' church, Daresbury, where Carroll was baptised in 1832, has a memorial window and a pulpit carved with curious beasts including, some say, the original griffin that "Alice did not quite like the look of".

Eastbourne, East Sussex, has a plaque in Lushington Road on the house where Lewis Carroll stayed every summer for almost 20 years.

Farringford, Lord Tennyson's Isle of Wight home, saw several visits by Carroll even though he had written a hilarious spoof on one of Tennyson's poems. He saved his best send-up for W W Longfellow and called it "Hiawatha Photographing".

Guildford, Surrey, holds a commemorative service on 11 January at St Mary's, near the house where the writer died, overlooking Castle Gardens and Guildford Museum, which has an important Carroll collection. The centenary celebrations, 8-22 May, include plays, musicals, walks, lectures, Snark Hunt and Mad Hatter's Tea Party. Details: Guildford Borough Council (01483 444334/8).

Hunting the Snark was dedicated to a little girl who Carroll made friends with on the beach at Sandown, on the ...

Ile of Wight. Carroll spent three summers, lodging near the library, and wrote a poem to her that forms an acrostic on her name, Gertrude.

Jabberwocky's opening verse was written in 1855 during a visit to the Dodgsons' cousins, "the Whitburn Wilcoxes" who lived near South Tyneside. Whitburn library has a modern sculpture of Carroll; a local festival, in June, will have children's events themed on Alice. Details: South Tyneside Borough Council (0191 427 171).

Kelmscott House, beside the Thames at Hammersmith, London (later owned by William Morris) was occupied by Carroll's friend and fellow-author George MacDonald, who test-read *Alice* to his children and then persuaded Carroll to print it.

Llandudno, Gwynedd, the Liddell family's favourite resort, has a small Rabbit

Hole of walk-through Wonderland scenes, down a basement in Trinity Square; a White Rabbit statue on West Shore; and a collection of illustrated *Alices* at the library. The house the Liddells rented in 1861 is now St Tudno's Hotel. Tourist information centre, 01492 876413.

Mrs Alice Hargreaves (née Liddell) was married at St Michael's, Lyndhurst, Hampshire (1934). Christchurch nearby has an *Alice in Wonderland* children's play-park (01202-483444).

National Portrait Gallery, London, plans an exhibition of Lewis Carroll photographs, July-September.

Oxford is packed with places linked to Dodgson and Alice Liddell: the Old Sheep Shop in St Aldate's, the Botanical Gardens and Magdalen College deer park. Carroll's own

college, Christ Church (his picture is in the Great Hall) holds a centenary dinner on 14 January, an exhibition in the picture gallery in July, and special tours July-September. Details: Christ Church head custodian (01865 276492). There is also a residential Lewis Carroll centenary programme of tours and talks, 16-22 August, organised by Oxford University Dept of Continuing Education and the Lewis Carroll Society (01865 270378).

Pennmorfa is the name of the Liddell's summer home at Llandudno, built for them in 1862 and since extended as Gogarth Abbey Hotel (01492 87621).

Quite soon after his father's death, Carroll retreated to Whitby, North

Yorkshire, as he had several times before. He always stayed at 5 East Terrace, now Barnard's Hotel.

Ripon, North Yorkshire, is making Carroll the theme of its four main events this year. From 1 April-31 May, there is an exhibition in the Minster Library, covering Ripon's spring festival. The summer festival has performances of *Wonderland* in the Deanery Gardens, 24-26 July, and St Wilfrid's Festival, October, features a Lewis Carroll flower festival. Harrogate Tourist Information Centre (01423 537300).

Swale House, Richmond, North Yorkshire, gave Carroll his first taste of boarding school; Swaledale Festival includes a talk, "Carroll's Northern Wonderland", at Castle Bolton on 2 June. Richmond Tourist Information Centre (01748 850252).

The School Museum, Rugby, Warwickshire (01788 574117), has a Carroll centenary exhibition, January-March, commemorating his four years there.



University of Wales, Cardiff, and the Lewis Carroll Society are staging an academic conference, "The Lewis Carroll Phenomenon", 1-5 April. Details: fax 01222 874502, or e-mail Carroll-conference@cardiff.ac.uk

Victorian Extravaganza, Llandudno, 2-4 May, is an annual gala, when "Alice" is chosen from local children and begins to "reign" over the Liddell family's favourite resort. (Llandudno TIC 01492 876413).

Walton Hall and Heritage Centre, near Warrington, Cheshire, plans a book fair and exhibition, 29 March, and performances of "Jabberwocky", 25-27 June. The Heritage Centre has a display on Carroll's local connections (01925 601617).

Xtras taught at the Mock Turtle's school were "Drawing, Stretching, and Faint-



ing in Coils" but it was the Red Queen who taught Alice the rule: always "curtsey while you're thinking".

You are old Father William' and a Mad Hatter programme of music with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, 23 May, are some of the performances lined up for Cardiff's six-month Carroll centenary festival, starting in April. (01222 233895).

Z is the shape of the Mouse's tail, printed as Carroll instructed, winding down the page.

Sally Varlow is the author of 'A Reader's Guide to Whimsy's Britain' (Penguin Books, £16.99). Some events listed above may be subject to change.

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continues overleaf.

Leafy ways to floral beauty

The key to successful flower-arranging is the foliage. This, and much more, Sally Staples learnt in a west London library.

Judith Blacklock weaves her way through tables loaded with flowers and foliage, throwing a word here and a suggestion there. Though barely 5ft tall, she possesses the energy of a dynamo and enthusiasm to match.

"What's this called?" she asks, brandishing a bunch of berries or a sprig of foliage. The same questions will be repeated several times during her two-hour flower-arranging class, and beginners become familiar with all sorts of exotic-sounding greenery almost by osmosis.

The blackboard looks like a left-over Latin lesson. We read *Fiberum tinus* - which seems to crop up in lots of the arrangements - skimmia, choysa, heder, fattedera, hebe, euonymus, and many more.

What strikes you at first glance is that the emphasis here is not on angling flowers to look pretty in a vase. The students are learning that the basis of flower-arranging is choosing the foliage. They are being taught about textures, space, proportion and colour, about what is dominant and what is in danger of being overshadowed or obscured.

Many of the 12 women - there were no men in this class, taking place in a hall attached to a library in Barnes, west London - had begun the 13-week course knowing little about the mechanics of flower-arranging. Nearly all of them were so inspired by the two-hour class that they



Shaping up: Judith Blacklock's flower-arranging session at Barnes library
Photograph: Peter Macdarmid

signed up for further sessions in the new year.

Carolyn Donahoe, a Canadian, says Judith's classes are inspiring because she offers suggestions and tips rather than rigid formats. "She teaches you to recognise the quality of flowers when you buy them, and how important it is to give them a long drink before they go into an arrangement. You learn to see what will give a harmonious finish, how to judge proportion and form. You learn to follow certain rules, but begin to understand which ones can be bent."

During the first hour the women labour away on their arrangements while Judith offers praise and encouragement. Sometimes she will hold up a half-finished piece of work and ask for suggestions from the class. Everyone is encouraged to look at and learn from other people's work.

Caroline Williams is thrilled with her mantelpiece decoration, which has two lily stems as the focus in a bed of greenery. "I have no real talent or flair but I really feel a great sense of achievement to have finished something like this," she says.

Caroline has spent £5 on the lilies. Sometimes she buys carnations from a supermarket and brings foliage from the garden. All the students are required to provide flowers for each session and the lessons are adapted to suit people who spend only a little as well as those who splash out on £20-£30-worth of flowers.

The students are asked to bring secateurs and some have their own "oases" - water-absorbent bases for the arrangement - but these can be bought at the classes.

Sue Robertson says that she became so

interested in the classes that she is now studying for a diploma, and finds making her arrangements very therapeutic. "It's great fun when the seasons change and you can explore different ways of presenting things," she says. She has made a ring with ivy, choysa, viburnum, hypericum berries, holly berries and salmon-pink roses. The centrepiece is a large white candle set inside a hurricane lamp.

At the end of an hour Judith inspects each arrangement, commenting and offering tips: if you see carnations with white

stamens showing, that indicates they are past their best; white and cream colours are most dominant, and purple the least dominant, so a purple-and-white arrangement placed in a dark room will not show up well; anything positioned above a lit fire will dry out quickly, and must be watered frequently.

The second half of each lesson is a demonstration given by Judith, during which the students take notes. What they are watching will be the foundation for the next week's work.

"It is essential to learn the basic structures," explains Judith. "But what I also try to do in my classes is to develop a modern style, exploring shapes and forms. The round shape is the dominant one, and the eye will always follow the round shape."

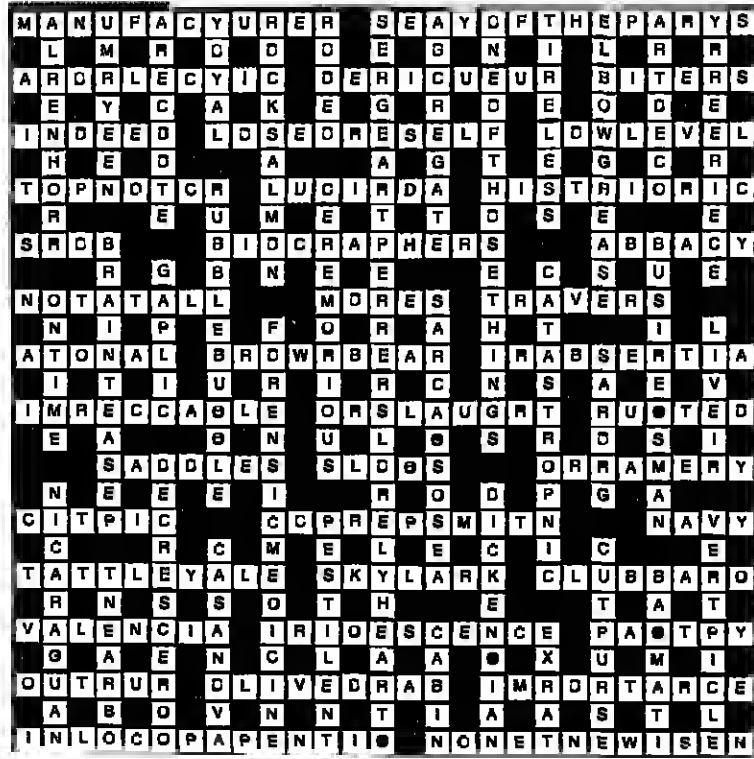
In what seems like a trice she cuts and places a mass of foliage into an S-shaped "oasis" and then inserts winter jasmine, blue anemones, yellow tulips and red roses. Each stem is expertly angled into the base, and like all gifted professionals she makes it look easy. "If you use a lot of foliage and textures, you have to be careful not to add too many colours," she explains.

Judith Blacklock's 13-week course costs £49 (or £37 for concessions); for details, call 0181-255 7440. She also runs courses at Richmond Adult and Community College in Twickenham (0181-891 5907) and gives private lessons to groups of up to five people (0181-255 7440). She has written several books, including *Teach Yourself Flower Arranging* (Hodder & Stoughton, £6.99). Most adult education colleges offer courses in flower-arranging and information can be obtained from local education authorities.

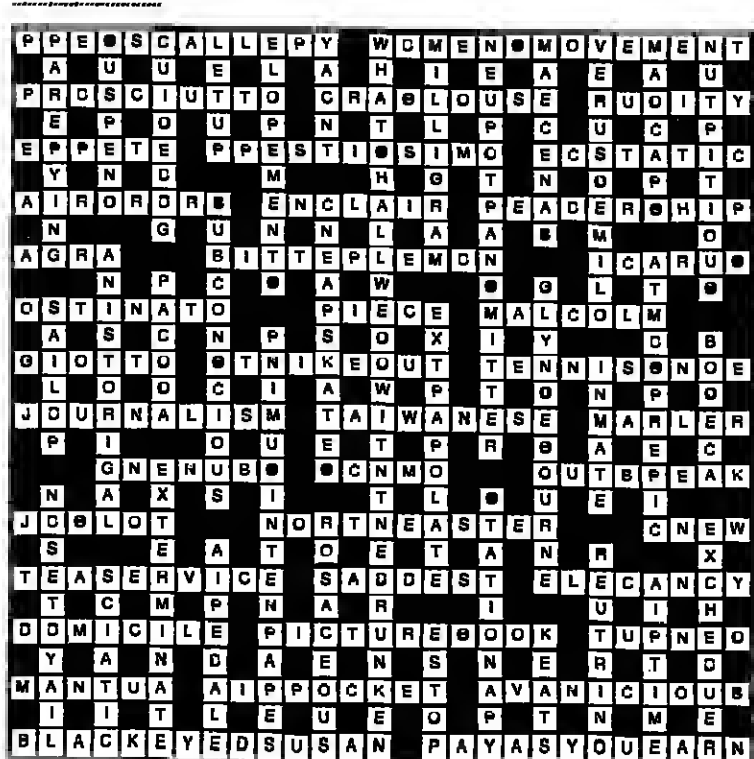
GAMES

CHRISTMAS JUMBO CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS AND WINNERS

CONCISE



CRYPTIC



Cryptic crossword winner: R Moore, Southampton.
Runners-up: J Bartlett, Middlesbrough; J Howson, Charders Ford; S Keen, Finchley, London N3; P Igce, Wallasey; J Lewis, Harrow; A Walter, Leitham.

Concise crossword winner: P Alderson, London SW15.
Runners-up: J Frew, London N6; R Taylor, Swansea; A Kelly, Purley; J Foster-Curtis, Norwich; L Langdon, Bristol; R Skyrme, Guernsey.

CHESS: WILLIAM HARTSTON

In 1987, Anatoly Karpov faced Garry Kasparov in the final game of a world championship match in Seville. He was a point ahead and needed only to draw with the black pieces to take the title. The importance of the game seemed to overcome him. He played slower and slower, drifted into severe time-trouble, then, when Kasparov introduced some brilliant complications, Karpov went wrong and lost.

With the passage of a little more than 10 years, it seems that little has changed. This time he needed to draw with Anand to win the championship, but again he drifted into time-trouble. This time, the blunder was worse. It is difficult to guess what Karpov was thinking when he played 27...Bc6, but the move cost him a piece. It is true that 30...Qh4? 31.Qxh4 allows a draw by perpetual check with Rg2+ and Rf2+, but simply 31.Qxh4 left White a bishop up. Now the title will be decided by a quickplay play-off.

White: Viswanathan Anand
Black: Anatoly Karpov
World Championship - Game six

| | |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1 d4 Nf6 | 23 Qf2 Bg7 |
| 2 Bg5 e6 | 24 Nd4 Bd7 |
| 3 e4 h6 | 25 dxc6 Bxd4 |
| 4 Bxf6 Qxf6 | 26 cxd4 fxc6 |
| 5 Nc3 d6 | 27 e5 Bc6 |
| 6 Qd2 g5 | 28 Ng6 Qd8 |
| 7 Bc4 Nc6 | 29 Nxd8 Bxf3 |
| 8 Nge2 Bg7 | 30 Nf7 Qh4 |
| 9 Rd1 Bd7 | 31 Qxf3 Qxd4+ |
| 10 0-0 0-0 | 32 Kh1 d5 |
| 11 Nh5 a6 | 33 Rd1 Qxb4 |
| 12 Na3 g4 | 34 Rb1 Qa4 |
| 13 f4 gxf3 | 35 Qxh5 Nc6 |
| 14 Rxf3 Qe7 | 36 Qe2 Ka7 |
| 15 c3 h5 | 37 Qf2+ h6 |
| 16 Rdf1 Rdf8 | 38 Rcl Kb7 |
| 17 b4 Na7 | 39 h3 Rc8 |
| 18 Nc2 Bh6 | 40 Qf6 Nd4 |
| 19 Qel Kh8 | 41 Nd8+ Kh8 |
| 20 Bd3 Bc6 | 42 Nxe6 |
| 21 Nf4 Rf8 | Black resigned |
| 22 d5 Be8 | |

PANDORA MELLY GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

The Honourable Sir Oliver Popplewell, 69, High Court Judge

I've had a lot of fun playing cricket. I've even played on the Inner Temple lawn. In fact we recently had a game there for the Peter May Memorial Fund. It was quite a lively wicket, and we raised a bob or two.

The Bar has a cricket club called the Refreshers, and I'm wearing the tie. It has a beer mug on it, and the numbers one, three, six, standing for one pound, three shillings and sixpence, which was the minimum that a member of the bar could earn when the club was founded in 1937.

The Bar used to play at the Oval to raise money for the Barristers' Clerks Benevolent Fund. There was a clerk called Reg Henty who played for Surrey before the war, and if he made runs, the clerks won. We don't play at the Oval any more - fewer and fewer people came to watch, so the Oval not unreasonably said they'd got better things to do with their pitch.

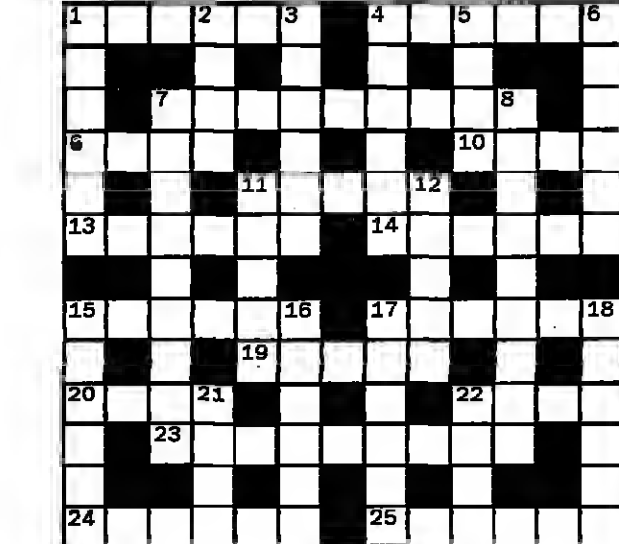
I had a marvellous time up at Cambridge. In those days, we had nothing but test players in the side, and in 1950 we played the West Indies. I wasn't playing because I was doing my exams, but Cambridge made 520-odd for 4 declared at lunch time on the second day. Then the West Indies made 720 for 3, and my replacement as wicket-keeper dropped Weekes, who then made over 300. So it was "Come back Popplewell, all is forgiven".

My son Nigel used to play for Somerset, which was enormously exciting. As a cricketer, you'd give your right eye to bowl with Garner, or to bat with Botham and Richards. Nigel once caught a very good catch in a final against Sussex, and Stuart Surridge got so excited, he started kissing my wife.

Go out to bat with a 'Purist Original' from Gunn & Moore, (recommended retail price: £199.99) available at reputable sports shops.

CONCISE CROSSWORD

No.3504 Saturday 10 January



ACROSS

- 1 Detain without trial (6)
- 2 Country (6)
- 3 Invaluable (9)
- 4 Press clothes (4)
- 5 Flightless bird (4)
- 6 Army rank (5)
- 7 Public speaker (6)
- 8 Stinging plant (6)
- 9 Oppose (6)
- 10 Deceptions by poker players (6)
- 11 Sooner than expected (5)
- 12 Society (4)
- 13 Percussion instrument (4)
- 14 Small weight (9)
- 15 Gentle (6)
- 16 Overthrow (6)

DOWN

- 1 Deep blue dye (6)
- 2 Merit (4)
- 3 Drink of the gods (6)
- 4 English animal (6)
- 5 Piece of work (4)
- 6 Beginner (6)
- 7 Chemical element (9)
- 8 Senior pupils (5,4)
- 9 Computer accessory (5)
- 10 Answer (5)
- 11 Noise (6)
- 12 Garment worker (6)
- 13 Plant disease (6)
- 14 Taste (6)
- 15 Tie securely (4)
- 16 Moist (4)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:

ACROSS: 1 Boom, 3 Harangue (Boomerang), 9 Cello, 10 Odiment, 1 Sip, 13 Agnusmon, 14 Repeat, 16 Escort, 18 Barbarian, 20 Mad, 22 Unleash, 23 Locust, 25 Deprise, 26 Tray. DOWN: 1 Bucks, 2 Owl, 4 Anorak, 5 Address, 6 Green room, 7 Extinct, 8 Iota, 12 Paper-clip, 14 Rebound, 15 Adoniam, 17 Wishee, 19 Nile, 21 Dummy, 24 Car.

BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

Game all: dealer South

| | |
|--------------|-------------|
| North | East |
| ♠ K 7 2 | ♠ 10 9 8 3 |
| ♥ 10 6 4 | ♥ Q 8 5 3 |
| ♦ K 10 9 2 | ♦ A J 5 4 3 |
| ♣ 7 5 3 | ♣ none |
| West | South |
| ♠ Q J 6 | ♠ A 5 4 |
| ♥ J 9 2 | ♥ A K 7 |
| ♦ 7 6 | ♦ Q 8 |
| ♠ J 10 9 8 4 | ♠ A K Q 6 2 |

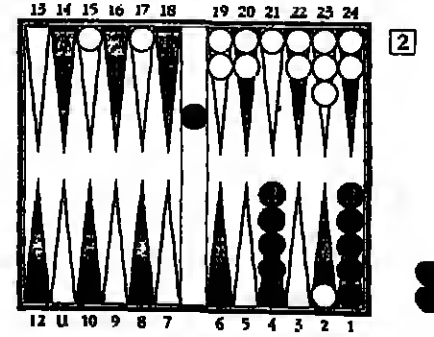
"I saw a hand just like this in a book of problems!" South claimed excitedly after this deal. There was one tiny snag: he only remembered the critical play after he had gone down in Three No-trumps.

Upgrading his hand slightly on the strength of his healthy five-card suit, South opened 2♠ and rebid 2NT over North's negative response. Although this was not forcing, North had plenty with which to raise to game.

West led ♠ J against 3NT and East discarded a diamond. This was irritating for declarer as it meant that nothing extra would come in from clubs. Never mind, he thought: with a sure side entry to dummy, the diamonds would provide the missing two tricks. It did not work out like that for when at trick two declarer led ♠ Q, East allowed it to hold. Now the diamond suit was dead and, whatever South tried, he was now restricted to eight tricks.

Well, what was the theme of the temporarily forgotten old problem? After discovering the tiresome club break at trick one, declarer should have led and run ♠ 8. If this is allowed to hold, it is easy to establish a second trick in the suit; if the eight loses to the jack, South's queen can be overtaken with the king and (with the vital spade entry still there) two tricks established by force.

BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY



In the box playing Black was the Tempestuous Turk (TT). Minus 20 on the scoresheet and having a bad night, he finally thought his time had come when playing against The Doyen and myself. We had been doubled early and then got involved in a massive back-game. At the height of this game we had made our 1-, 2- and 3-points with an extra man on the 2-point, and our other 8 men were in or around TT's home board.

TT had borne off only two men (shown at the right in the diagram) when he left an early shot. We hit it, but with only a three point board and the rest of the men well spread, we had little chance of containing the man we had hit. Over the next five minutes, however, with a mixture of skill and luck we gradually built up our board, hitting TT's man each time it looked like escaping. In the position above we had just slotted our 4-point and TT had fanned once again. We redoubled.

With an imperious wave of his cigar TT snatched the cube. We rolled 62, covering the blot and easily won the game. Was it a take? The answer is fairly clearly no. The blot on the 4-point is covered by 27 rolls. TT, with only two men off would be lucky to win the race more than 8 per cent of the time. If we fail to cover, TT will hit the exposed blot 30 per cent of the time. Thus of the 9 times we fail to cover he will hit 3 times and even some of his hits (41 and 42) force him to expose another blot. He should have let this one go.

This was a case of emotion interfering with rational thinking. After the turnaround that had taken place TT's cube-handling was based purely on not wanting to give up a game that had been previously "won". Mistakes like this are commonplace. They are also very expensive, so remember: keep your emotions in check.

A Cornish cream of a train ride

This week Matthew Brace begins a series of great short train journeys of Britain by riding the Golden Trail in Cornwall.

The Cornish accents of two fishermen on the 18.33 train from Penzance to St Ives were rich enough to obscure most of their conversation but I was able to pick up key words and piece together their story. The younger one, with red-headed shirt and shaven head, had come off a trawler in Penzance, pent a day off sleeping. He was heading to St Ives to join a smaller fishing-boat for another stint.

The older fisherman had been with friends in Bristol when he was called to join a St Ives boat.

"D'you work the *Rose* ever?"

"No. Done the *Jezebel*, and the *Tregesal*. You worked on them?"

"Can't remember now; there's been a lot over the years."

They were riding the Golden Trail, so-called because of the fantastic sweeps of sand at either end. Little seems to have changed on this route since the railway first came to St Ives in 1877. Back then it carried fishermen, too, maybe the great-grandfathers of my fellow passengers. The line carried their catches as well as goods from farms and the in mines. This has always been a line for the working Cornishman. Only from the mid-Thirties was its potential as a tourist route realised, when the Cornish Riviera Express, with its elegant restaurant car, ran to and from St Ives.

Penzance to St Ives is one of the shortest train services in Britain but, like all in this series, it is a scheduled route, not merely a quaint, summer-only railway for day-trippers. It must rank among one of the most picturesque commutes in Britain. A little under 10 miles of track runs from Penzance, the last iceable town in the South-west, to St Ives, the fishing village that became the haunt of artists and now as its own Tate Gallery. The journey takes just 19 minutes.

At Penzance a raging sea lies just yards from the station; when wild weather hits here it comes straight out of the Atlantic. Spray sheets over the sea wall, lashing the platforms, and the boats in the harbour rock violently in the wind.

Cornwall was the last English county to be linked to the main railway system - by the Great Western Railway (GWR), known more poetically as God's Wonderful Railway.

The St Ives service runs every half hour or so. It chugs along the shore for about a mile, with only the South West Coast Path between it and the surf. On the right is the imposing bulk of St Michael's Mount; sit on the left and you may see the Scilly Islands helicopter take off.

Shortly before the small village of Marazion, the track heads inland across a nature reserve known for its terrifying flocks of starlings that swoop down here of an evening. The train winds through the Cornish interior via a series of embankments cut through the rock, and makes its first stop at St Erth. From here the mainline to London runs east through Cornwall, but the Golden Trail continues north.

At Lelant Saltings station, a park-and-ride has been set up, so people can leave their cars and hop on to the train for St Ives. It is an excellent idea; St Ives on a holiday weekend is teeming with traffic trying to park.

The line curves round the shore by Porth Kidney Sands, where the river Hayle empties into the Bristol Channel, and runs through Carbis Bay and into St Ives, offering arguably the best approach to the town.

After exploring the town, make for the warmth of the 14th-century Sloop Inn, with its snug rooms decorated with the black pastel sketches of local artists and crowded with yet more fishermen, swapping more stories.

On the footplate
When to go: the Golden Trail is open all year; go in spring and winter for ever-changing skies, in summer for day-long sunshine.

What to take: binoculars, maps, bucket and spade
What to see: St Michael's Mount (at low tide, via a causeway), tin mines (now museums)

How much: one-way fares cost £1.30 (under-16s), £2.60 adults; round trip (after 9am) £1.35 (under-16s), £2.70 adults; under-fives and bicycles (only two bikes per train) free.

Details: National Rail Enquiries (0345 454950); Cornwall Tourist Board (01872 274057)



Unloose the dogs of squelch

Imagine gliding silently across the snow, a wintry scene unfolding before you as you emerge from the forest, pulled by a team of willing huskies. Now imagine bumping squelchily along muddy tracks, with a foggy backdrop of Northamptonshire farmland, pulled by a bunch of wet dogs. Eric Kendall takes to the sled - on wheels.

Given the option, most people would go for the snowy ride, but Britain's dog sledgers rarely have a choice. Sledding here takes a special combination of dedication to the sport, love of the dogs and a bit more besides; it's no joke to house, train and feed a couple of them, let alone eight or 10. The surprising news that they've been banished from the Antarctic in favour of petrol power becomes as clear as, well, mud, when you see a team in action.

For most of a British season, training and competition involves rigs: three-wheeled chariots that would have earned Ben Hur a steward's enquiry for their lightweight steel frames, state-of-the-art mountain bike components and knobby tyres. In winter, when most people train after dark on week-days, powerful headlamps are essential.

Getting a team organised to run is fraught, with or without snow. The straining, yapping and moaning, amid a tangle of cords and fur, reaches fever pitch. Once the mushers have got their boots on, the dogs come out, harnessed one by one and linked together on gang lines - amazingly, the leaps and turns of the team don't cause a total snarl-up as often as would seem inevitable.

Sensing the off, the dogs are almost as excited as the mushers. Their fidgeting, baying and lunging exude anticipation which finally explodes into forward motion. At the chariot end, all you can do is hang on

tight as the rig jolts forward, and your shouts - it doesn't really matter what - urge them on, while you paddle with one foot or even run up steep sections. The brakes, which lie reassuringly to hand, are only good for preventing the rig from running downhill into the dogs' legs - not for pulling the team to a halt. If mushers come off, they can be towed along for ages on the end of a safety line which ensures they never lose the team.

Once you're up and running, the terrain provides half the challenge. Well-trained dogs follow the track and respond to the commands "Gee" (right) and "Haw" (left). They'll even stop (Whoa) when you tell them, unless they've got fleeing wildlife in their sights: badgers are a favourite, but anything alive will do.

When a lead dog smells something worth further investigation, and performs a sharp turn, a good team follows in unison in a disciplined manoeuvre that has a "years of training" look to it, right up until the moment when you career into the back of the bunch. That's all it takes to learn that the rig unfailingly goes where the dogs go, and that with all the mud, the brakes don't really work, even if you've got the reactions to grab them in time.

Untangling the mess is a chance for team bonding, but it's also the one time the dogs look as though they may tear each other apart. Under way again, you can concentrate on how you're going to turn around (a kind of deliberate version of the above) and, when you've done so, how to con the team into retracing their steps (never popular). Then there are the same snarl-traps on the return leg, for which you are at least forewarned, but so are the dogs. Running a circular route is a better bet for all concerned.

Depending on the distance run, the dogs may well be itching for the off again almost before they've stopped. And even if they look tired, don't take any chances: for these creatures, pulling is not just a way of life, it's an instinct - hitching them to the

humper of your car could be the quickest way to lose both your dogs and your more conventional form of transport in one go.

The dogs

The best sled dogs are relatively lightweight, good-natured Siberian huskies. They are ideal for hauling a shared weight all day at a steady pace. In racing terms, smaller teams travel at comparable speeds to bigger ones but generally run shorter courses. Between two and eight dogs are normally used. Various other breeds are also raced in different classes.

Though Siberian huskies obey many commands as sled dogs, they can't be

trained off the lead - once they're off they're away for good. In this respect they make lousy pets. They are well adapted to a cold, snowy environment: along with thick coats, they have webbed feet, and long eyelashes and hairy ears to keep out the snow. Though they are considered to be working dogs, it's surprising to find how affectionate they are. It's doubly rewarding to have one of them leap into your arms through sheer enthusiasm, as to the uninitiated they look like wolves.

For further information contact the Siberian Husky Club of Great Britain (01604 686 281). Send an A4 sec (enclosing two extra first-class stamps) for breed

and dog-sledding information to: Penny Evans, Honorary Secretary, SHCGB, The Old Post Office, 3 High Street, Lamport, Northampton NN6 9HB.

Dog-sledding in the UK

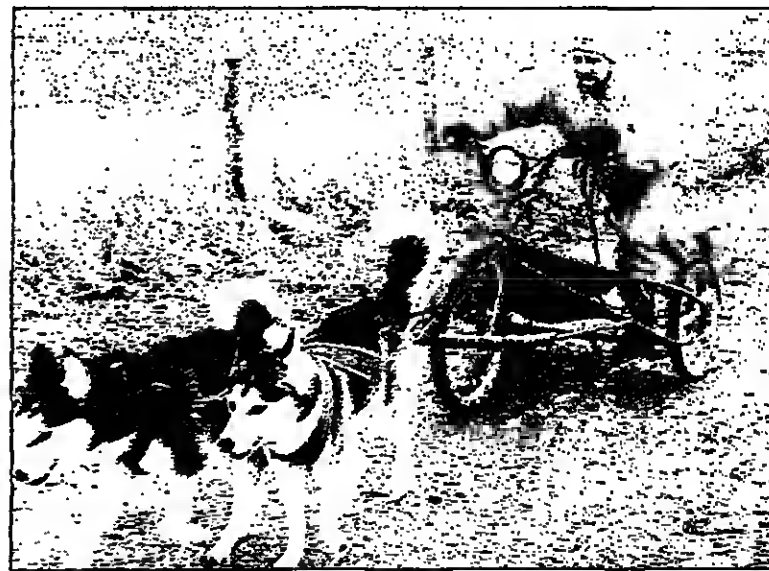
Scotland is the obvious place, with the best chance of regular snow. The Aviemore Snow Rally 1998, on 24-25 January, is the best place to spectate and find out more about the sport, with a good chance of snow and around 180 teams competing in the Glenmore Forest. Contact the Highlands of Scotland Tourist Office (01479 810363) for details. Other competitions are held throughout the UK, mostly on wheels.

In the first week of February, weather permitting, Alan Stewart (01546 603915) will be sledding through the Cairngorms with his 12-year-old son, John, and meeting up with the polar explorer Borge Ousland, who will ski into the range towing his Antarctic sled. The aim of the expedition, "Travellers of the Cold", is to go through the UK's most remote area at a demanding time of year, using dog teams under conditions in which they excel.

Dog-sledding abroad

Alaska's 1,049-mile Iditarod Trail Race, held in March, is the best known dog-sledding event. Canada and Alaska, where sledding started, have endless terrain and opportunities for day trips and longer expeditions. Try Algonquin Way Kennels (001 613 332 4005) for trips into Algonquin Park, Ontario.

There are also chances to drive or ride in Iceland and Scandinavia, and, increasingly, in Continental ski resorts.



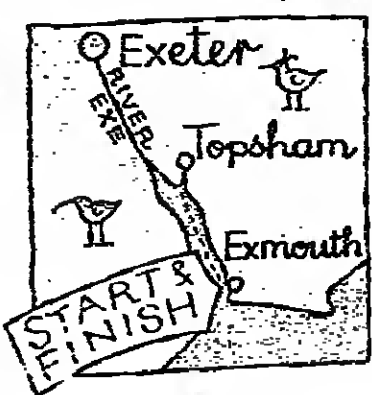
Dog daze: however well trained, most sled dogs cannot be let off the lead, and so make lousy pets. Photographs: Eric Kendall

What, when, where ...



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Sally Kindberg



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Eddery's back: that means a new challenge not an old crisis

Despite surgery on his spine that ended his season prematurely last year, Pat Eddery is fired up to pursue Lester Piggott's career total of 4,493 wins. He also has some words of warning for Frankie Dettori.

After a while, as you have settled into Pat Eddery's Crystal Palace of a conservatory, you feel brave enough to mention the word retirement. Pat ponders for a moment, considering whether you mean you or him, and then reacts as if you've suggested castration on his kitchen table. He'd happily carry it out on his impertinent visitor.

Patrick James John Eddery may be 46 on the middle day of the Cheltenham Festival, he may be recovering from surgery near his spine, but he is not yet ready for the flower seeds and Horlicks. His back is not a problem. It never has been. He likes putting it into things.

Sir Gordon Richards may be dead, and the same fate may have befallen Lester Piggott's riding career, but

because I'd never been under the scalpel before," he said. The damaged disc was removed from the small of his back, but, rather like a counter being taken from a pile of playing chips, it was more inconvenient than terminally damaging. Eddery was soon pottering around his property, and you can do a lot of pottering at Muskhill Farm, which occupies 107 acres of Buckinghamshire pastureland. The jockey has another 73 acres at his stud, where he has mares which benefit from nominations to the likes of Caerleon and Zafonic.

As he sits in his conservatory, Pat Eddery looks rather neat in a blue and green checked shirt, jeans and cowboy boots. He does not look in decline. His figure remains like the one that most people take out of the school gates on their final day but never see again. It's a rather ridiculous moment when a tubby reporter asks Eddery if his body is past it. "Never once did I think of retirement because of my back," he said. "Riding horses is what I do."

Eddery is rather tickled at the suggestion that his schedule might not be so hectic this term. He believes you should either have

BY RICHARD EDMONDSON

the only other man to ride 4,000 winners in Britain still has plenty of fuel to throw on the fire. Eddery, in fact, spent most of 1997 with coalman's back following a cloudy day in April. "I rode this horse for Reg Hollishead at Nottingham and he won easily, but right at the end of the race he jinked, the sort of thing that thousands of horses have done with me, the sort of thing that happens every day," Eddery said. "But I felt a slight twinge. The next day I rode another winner for Richard [Hannon] and it was worse and I knew something was wrong."

The problem was a slipped disc that was pinching his spine, an injury which left him intermittently with a locked back and numbness in his legs. As he was partnering plenty of winners, Eddery ignored medical advice and rode through the discomfort and most of the season. However, after Silver Patriarch's victory in the St Leger, the 4,000th of the rider's career, Mother Nature's stabbing with the knitting needle became too much and Eddery agreed to an operation. "I was a bit worried

the accelerator on the floor or not get into the vehicle at all, and dismisses Frankie Dettori's intention to cherry pick his rides this season. "That's all part of the game, going to the Folkestones and the smaller tracks, because it's not Royal Ascot every day," Eddery said. "It's ridiculous what Frankie is thinking of doing, you can't just get on the winning rides all the time, you've got to build up."

"You can't just take days off like Wally Swinburn does sometimes, you've got to be out there every day working those muscles, riding in every race if you want to be at your best. I never take time off unless I have to because it says the wrong things. If I was a trainer and I didn't think the guy was riding at 100 per cent all the time and was motivated I wouldn't put him up."

"Probably the one thing that keeps me going is riding winners. Every one still gives me a kick. There may be more money for a Derby than a seller but that doesn't make you try any harder. A winner is a winner."

Pat Eddery's story began in Dublin, the son of racing folk



Eddery: 'Never once did I think of retirement. Riding horses is what I do'

Photograph: Robert Hallam

who was riding ponies at four and racehorses at eight (that's age and not o'clock). He was initially apprenticed to Seamus McGrath and his first ride, True Time, finished last at the Curragh in August 1967. The leading trainer then was Noel Murless, whose Royal Palace had won the Derby, and some considered that Foinavon had been lucky to win that year's Grand National. Pat Eddery was 15.

Eddery, though, was essentially forged when he enrolled at Frenchic Nicholson's Cheltenham jockey academy. "They say one in a thousand make it and the reason I did was because I was lucky and I had good people behind me," the Irishman said. "I owe just about 100 per cent of it to Frenchic, who taught me how to ride and, even more importantly, looked after

me. When you're a young man with a few quid in your pocket for the first time things can go the wrong way and you need someone to grab your collar."

It must be said that Pat has managed to get off the leash a few times to make visits to the tabloids. He cannot, however, have constructed his career on blarney foundations.

Indeed, the PJJ Eddery most of us know from the racecourse is the man with the facial emollient of an Easter Island statue. His ration of smiles is taken up by another weighing-room notable. It's not a game to Pat Eddery. It's his business.

There is little roccoco about Eddery. He may not swap ideas with Stephen Hawking either, but when the prototype for a riding machine was developed it was he that was placed on a

podium from which he has yet to slip.

There exists, Eddery believes, only a handful of jockeys who do thunderously well out of racing, enough to go round a generous dining table. They get the steaming roasts and fine wines, while others try to pull the chairs away. "They're a great bunch of lads in the weighing room at the moment and good riders, too - it's not like France where they're so boring - but there are only about six or seven riders who pick up all the best rides," he said. "They make a really good living out of the game and you've got to stay with them and be someone who is guaranteed a ride in every race because once you slip from there you'll never get back. There are plenty of young, hungry jockeys waiting to take your place."

This is a basic instinct which has driven the rider for almost 30 years. It will do so again after he has been on a skiing holiday and to Barbados and will carry him past one of the few remaining milestones on his road. Eddery says he will ride not much further than his 50th birthday, by which time he should be in the proximity of a legend, another man with 11 jockeys' championships to his name. "Lester was out of the saddle for a hit while he was training and then when he had that mishap with the Revenue," it's never been called that before.

If Eddery can avoid mishaps of his own he should pass the 4,493 career total of Lester Piggott, who established himself in the common mind as the greatest jockey of the age. What does that make Pat Eddery?

As one might imagine, American football is well-served by the Internet. Tomorrow is Championship Sunday, with the Super Bowl champs Green Bay at San Francisco for the NFC title and Denver at Pittsburgh for the AFC honours. Super Bowl XXXII is in two weeks' time in San Diego.

The official National Football League site is a good starting place. It contains direct links to all 30 clubs, though you do need to know the insignias for a quick access, news, tables, and week-by-week breakdown of the season. Each club site has its seasonal record, players' and coaching roster and a good selection of video and audio clips. The site is running a fantasy Super Bowl play-off, with all the previous 31 winners matched up in a draw, with visitors to the site invited to vote on each game. The '72 Dolphins, the only unbeaten side in NFL history, get a bye.

You can also buy the NFL Family Cookbook, which contains Brett Favre's recipe for crawfish étouffée and Tom Coughlin's Fried Cakes, apparently the diet for most pro footballers.

All the big American TV

SWIMMING

Chinese stand firm over drugs disgrace

China have insisted their team would not be withdrawn from the World Championships despite a swimmer and coach being charged with drug trafficking. The Chinese received international condemnation after claiming vials containing human growth hormones discovered in a random search yesterday were brought for someone living in Australia.

The swimmer Yuan Yuan and her coach, Zhou Zhewen, have been charged with trafficking an illegal performance-enhancing drug by Fina, the world governing body. Each faces a ban of at least four years.

The rest of the team have been cleared to compete in the championships which commence in Perth's Challenge Stadium on Monday despite calls for them to be sent home in disgrace.

With China's women swimmers expected to reap a rich harvest of medals, it will inevitably leave a pall of suspicion hanging over the competition. Even if they fail to live up to

their rankings it will only raise speculation they have been ordered to lose by officials in Peking.

Shi Tianshu, China's chief de mission, said in Perth yesterday: "We have come here with 33 swimmers and 12 coaches. But if one or two people make a mistake, you cannot regard that individual behaviour as a collective one."

The Fina secretary, Gunnar Werner, said no action would be taken against the Chinese team "as we have not found any reason to do that". He confirmed the entire Chinese team had been drug-tested at the championships and expected the results to be known within 24 hours.

The Australia coach, Forbes Carlyle, called for the Chinese team to leave Perth. He said: "When you're caught with that amount of drugs on your person and you're part of a team, the whole team are implicated. They should be put on a plane and sent home."

- Ian Gordon

HOCKEY

Dancer splits squad in two

There will be a lot of unfamiliar faces contesting this weekend's preliminary round of the Indoor Club Championship at Birmingham and Kidderminster as England takes a 27-strong squad to Sicily.

England, under their new coach, Barry Dancer, play full internationals against Italy, with the Australian planning to split his squad in two to ensure each member is guaranteed a game.

With the England and Great Britain teams having notched up six straight wins in the previous encounters, scoring 34 goals and conceding just one, Dancer should start his England career on a high note.

The leading English indoor clubs faltered badly in the DTZ Midland tournament last weekend, with the national champions, St Albans, and last year's finalists, East Grinstead, failing to reach the quarter-finals.

St Albans will, however, be strengthened by the former England captain Andy Halliday and Guildford's Ian Jennings while Grinstead have recalled the Olympic gold medalist Richard Leman. With strengthened teams, both should qualify for finals night at Crystal Palace on Friday 6 February.

- Bill Colwill

BASKETBALL

Tresvant takes a Giant step

Manchester Giants' revolving door policy on transfers took another spin this week with the signing of John Tresvant, for the third time. The coach, Jim Brandon, needs the 32-year-old American to settle quickly for tonight's meeting with Derby.

Whether or not a work permit arrives for the England coach, Laszlo Nemeth, in time for him to lead Derby tonight at the Nynex Arena, the Storm's stand-in coach, Jeff Jones, will not be denied his chance to call the shots against the club where he made his league debut in 1976.

On Thursday night Jones steered Derby to their first consecutive league wins of the season, with a comeback 99-92 victory over Worthing which lifted them into 10th place.

Giants, currently seventh, are under pressure to stay in contention for the play-off quarter-finals. Brandon, who released Michael Brown to make way for Tresvant, said: "We have a talented group of youngsters but we have been missing one extra man in previous situations to get the job done."

London Towers could open more distance over the chasing pack when they play winless Watford Royals tonight.

- Richard Taylor

Sherwood knows how good Him Of Praise is but the handicapper has yet to find out

Last season Him Of Praise did nothing but disappoint Oliver Sherwood. This campaign is quite the opposite. The eight-year-old goes into the Mildmay/Cazet Memorial Chase at Sandown today on a five-timer and with talk of him being the ideal conveyance for Aintree in April. It is not an eventuality his trainer previously imagined.

"Last year he just didn't fire and he disappointed me," Sherwood said yesterday. "He had only three runs and always coughed after working. We

scoped and blood-tested him more times than we had hot dinners but couldn't find anything.

"This year he's come back to form and he's much more interested. As a result of all that he was well-handicapped at the start of the year. He does nothing in front and it always looks like hard work. He's only ever going to win his races by three or four lengths so he looks after his own handicap mark."

A measure of just how well Him Of Praise (next best 3.10) is treated can be drawn from his

relationship with the Welsh National runner-up, Dom Samourai. When the pair met at Haydock in November, Him

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Upgrade
(Sandown 2.35)
NB: Him Of Praise
(Sandown 3.10)

Of Praise beat the grey by half a length. He now finds himself 6lb better off. "On the book we have the heating of Don Samourai and I'd be disap-

pointed if we didn't beat him again," Sherwood said. "He's in great order and we couldn't be more happy with him."

Sherwood runs another luminary, Buddy Marvel, in an appealing Towtown Hurdle. The four-year-old won both his starts over hurdles in Ireland before being purchased by Robert Ogden. They did not give him to the owner for pocket tops. Buddy Marvel has carried on the good work over here. "He's a bonny horse who's sharper and come on for his win at Lingfield."

Sherwood said. "We're climbing the ladder quietly with him and we hope one day he might be a Champion Hurdle horse."

More than one runner fits that description in today's race. Grey Shot, who broke the course record in the Jockey Club Cup at Newmarket this autumn, impressed sufficiently on his hurdling debut to persuade the Tote to make him 12-1 for this year's Champion. There is a doubt about how he will handle the sludge so the value could lie with a horse who has

finally reproduced the wonderful things he does on the gallops. Nigel Twiston-Davies's UPGRADE trap 2.35.

There is televised racing too from Leopardstown, where the Ladbroke Hurdle has taken on the significance of a protected event as it is screened on both the BBC and Channel 4. Moorish might the best of the British but the winner is likely to be Arctic Weather (2.25), who finished second to Atonne in this race four years ago.

- Richard Edmondson



GREG WOOD
THE A-Z
OF BETTING

Q is for . . .

Quadruped: Latin word which is most efficiently translated as "betting medium", since almost

any animal which has four feet and knows how to use them will be used for the purpose of gambling somewhere in the world. Horses and dogs are, of course, the media of choice in Britain, but Jeff Bernard was known to race cats in his front room during prolonged spells of bad weather, and the ancient sport of rat racing is still practised in certain university laboratories once the professors have gone home. Further afield, the principle that if it moves people will bet on it, holds firm. In some South American countries a popular pastime is to put a guinea pig into a sack, shake it vigorously, then tip it out into the middle of a circle of bolt-holes. Punters then speculate as to which of the holes the unfortunate creature will retire to in order to lose its lunch. This is cruel, admittedly, but a lot more exciting than 49s.

Quagmire: The standard state of the going in Ireland between late November and early March. Also known officially as "yielding to soft".

Qualifier: One of a series of races - almost invariably handicaps - which will culminate in a final at a major track. Horses cannot run in the final unless they have contested one of the qualifiers, but there is no requirement to win this earlier race, or indeed, even finish in the first 15. Since the final is always far more valuable than the qualifier, and a good run attracts the handicapper's attention, the whole structure of such a series is little short of an invitation to misbehave, and as a result, qualifying races are best treated with great caution.

Quantity and quality: Bookmakers prefer the former, and

serious punters the latter, so no prizes for guessing which is on offer during an average afternoon in your local betting shop. It has been suggested - and only half in jest - that bookies deliberately overload punters with information and betting opportunities in order to short-circuit their brains and send them into a stupefied state of auto-bet. Certainly, there are plenty of sad cases in the average shop who seem to scribble out slips as if possessed, and anyone who wants to emerge with some cash intact (and without a galloping case of writer's cramp) should repeat the shrewdies' mantra - "they have to offer odds, I don't have to bet" - 20 times before entering.

Queen Mum: Probably the oldest *Sporting Life* reader in the country - though she may

take a dim view of its imminent tabloidisation - and also, so rumour has it, an active and enthusiastic punter even as she approaches 100. Not out. If so, her bets are presumably placed via a credit account, what with the Royals being famously reluctant to carry cash, not to mention the thought of how unfortunate it would be if the nation's favourite gran were trampled in the rush for the 2.19 at Romford while placing an intricate series of cross-doubles in the Pall Mall branch of William Hill. The rest of us, of course, can only imagine what it must be like to ring one's bookie in the happy knowledge that, if one forgets to send one's cheque to settle one's losses, one is unlikely to get a letter by return of post which hints that some hairy men are coming round to break one's legs.

Queen's Hotel: One of the finest establishments in Cheltenham, and a focal point for the Irish influx during Festival week, at which time the magnificent Georgian facade hides a multitude of sins which would turn St Patrick pale. Rumour has it that, a few years ago, one visitor grabbed a few hours' sleep on the Wednesday night, but this seems unlikely, given that the card schools and backgammon sessions do not really get serious until the wee small hours. J.P. McManus, who counts a mean game of backgammon among his talents, spends his Festivals elsewhere these days, but the Queen's is still the place to go on the night before the Gold Cup - unless, of course, you would rather not see the jockey booked for the horse you've already hacked drinking himself unconscious just 12 hours before post time.

ADDRESSES

Official NFL site - <http://www.nfl.com/>
CBS Sportsline - <http://www.sportsline.com/>
For Sports - <http://www.for.sports.com/football/>
ESPN SportsZone - <http://espn.sportszone.com/nfl/index.html>
CNN & Sports Illustrated site - <http://cnn.sportsillustrated.com/superbowl98/>
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Official Broncos site - <http://www.denverbroncos.com/>
NFL Players site - <http://www.sportsline.com/nfl/NFLPlayers/>

Avoiding many of the sheep droppings, I perform desultory stretching exercises



MIKE
ROWBOTTOM
ON RUNNING
TOWARDS
CALMNESS

The style is the man, they say. And my running style, if such it can be termed, is a matter of low arms and pattering foot-steps. It creates a false impression of ease; you might call it grace under no pressure.

Now a combination of age, sloth and family life has curtailed my footballing there isn't a pressing need for me to keep fit - although I do have this long-term project on the go concerning the avoidance of mortality.

I consult no timepiece on my outings. And until they fell apart recently, I have worn a pair of old Miltie running shoes shunned by my stepson.

Proper runners may now turn the page, or read on with a curling upper lip. But my ex-

cursions into exertion are not without value to me.

Bishop's Stortford, where I have lived for nearly 20 years, is described in older guide-books as a sleepy market town. There is still a market on Thursdays and Saturdays where you can buy wicker-work animals, fresh wheel-bells, shell suits - so many things you don't need. But the expansion of Stansted Airport and improved road and rail links with London have engendered large new developments on the town's perimeter.

Meanwhile the town centre, honoured with a Marks and Spencer, a WH Smith and a Pizza Express, has had to devise its own mini-bypass. Not so sleepy town.

There are nevertheless many pleasant ways through this intensely civic place to the compromised fields which surround it.

I have become proprietorial about my favoured route. So come with me now, round our way.

Pause by the house gate for a sniff of night air - same as it ever was. Then down to the main road past All Saints Church, with its silent congregation of grave-stones. The seat built into the lych-gate, a favoured haunt for furiously proud under-age smokers, is empty.

Soon I am on the hedged footpath which runs down to the railway line. Over the bridge - up the steps, pump those arms, easy down the oth-

er side - and on into Grange Paddocks.

All the traditional civic features are hereabouts. Ornamental gardens, where pensioners bask on bright days. A war memorial engraved with names that still throng the local telephone directory - Sampford, Sapsford, Thurgood, Thurley.

Tennis courts, with booking forms hanging up in a hut alongside. A paddling pool; swings; football pitches still churned from Sunday morning's action. And Castle Mound, all that remains of what was once a prison for heretics during the Reformation, now fustily fenced off by the council. Warmingly, someone has forced a way through.

Winding through this suburban epitome of Nature Tamed is the River Stort. To run beside the river, sluggish and silted as it may be, is as irresistible as watching waves at the seaside.

Half-way down my riverside stretch, the track used to diverge around a willow. It always made me think of the Charles Adams cartoon of the skier proceeding downhill, his tracks having gone either side of a tree. Whether I went to the left or the right assumed a kind of wordless significance - but such vagaries have now been expunged following a shift in the line of the path.

On I go, metre after lonely metre, along Rye Street and up Barrellsdon Lane towards the waiting fields.

As the gradient increases, I ritually observe the names of four successive houses - Lerraham Hall (retired school-teacher, ha ha), Squirrels Close (closer to the top now), Haverbrack (resist this Nabokovian quest, this; fitting reward as the road starts to level out).

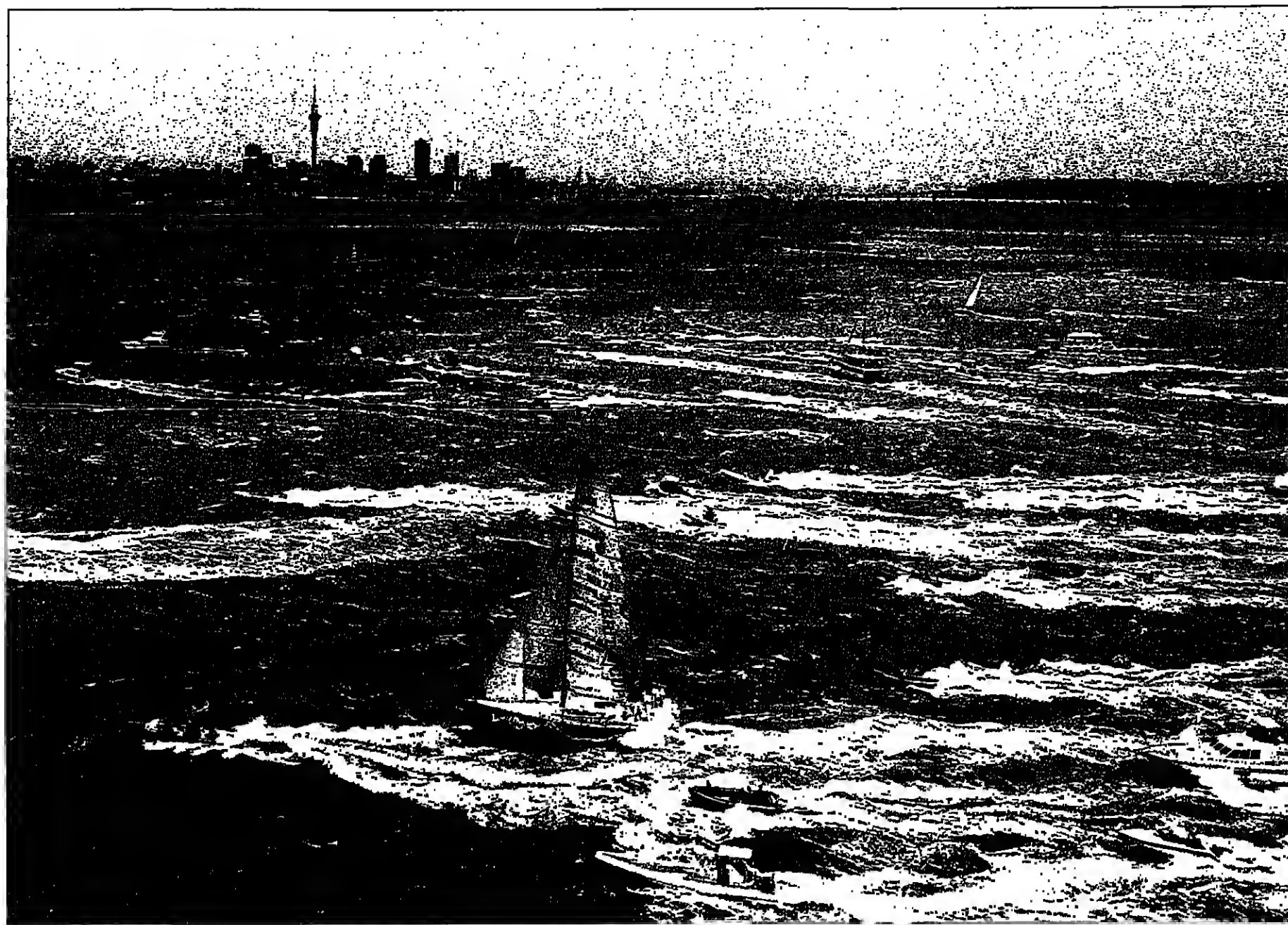
It is worrying how much of this nonsense fills my head. The road bends back, and here is Whitehall Trade Union College, as visited by Prime Minister Jim Callaghan in his pomp, and formerly - so my retired matron neighbour tells me - a boarding school, whose headmistress had a dubious double-barrelled name and a propensity for dodging hills.

Justice caught up with her after she did a runner to Eastbourne.

Here I leave the road and go down a gentle incline past a barley field. Sometimes I access a burst of energy on the way up the other side of this shallow valley.

Now, finally, the high point of the run approaches. I climb over a stile and make my way to where three oak trees stand close together in a field. I place myself in the middle of them, avoiding as many of the sheep droppings as I can, and perform desultory stretching exercises.

A hundred metres or so away, cars sweep along the by-pass; but they only emphasise the sense of solitude. By running to this point, I have earned a measure of calmness. I am concentrating on being exactly here.



Pride of the fleet: Grant Dalton's Merit Cup leads the Whitbread yachts into Auckland yesterday, surrounded by a host of spectator boats

Photograph: Allsport

Our longest day ends in sweet victory

Merit Cup won the fourth leg of the Whitbread Round the World Race in a gripping fight to the finish with Toshiba. At the end of a 1,270-mile ocean sprint, the two boats were only a quarter of a mile apart. Here Merit Cup's triumphant skipper describes the final 24-hour battle to be first from Sydney to Auckland.

The crew was magnificent. There have only been two days like this in my life and the other one was bringing New Zealand Endeavour through the finish line four years ago to win the Fremantle to Auckland leg in the 1993-94 Whitbread. But this time, for a high-pressure final 24 hours, the crew work was really sharp. I don't think they made a single crew error, while towards the end we could see that little mistakes were being made on Toshiba as they perhaps tired a little, perhaps realised that, if they could not catch us by then, they weren't going to catch us.

When we reached the northern tip of New Zealand we were thinking more about protecting our third position than expecting to win. Then we saw what we thought was a sophisticated cruising boat sitting offshore with a hi-tech mainsail. There was no way it could be a Whitbread boat as there was no way we could have caught the two boats in front of us.

Then we saw another with a more white sail just ahead, perhaps a sister ship. Then we saw that it was Swedish Match and Toshiba caught in a hole. There was wind on the beach, but even if they could see that they couldn't do anything about it because they had no wind to get across there.

So we got in among the breakers right under the cliffs along the shore, where we wouldn't normally go because normally there isn't any wind there. Chessie Racing and EF Language followed us, with Toshiba wriggling across late behind them. And then started the battle of the wind-shifts, change after change in wind direction as we worked our way along the shore, always protecting our place on the best side of the course as Chessie and EF kept coming after us.



GRANT
DALTON

In that situation Tom Dodson, one of the tactical thinkers in New Zealand's America's Cup winning crew, was masterful. He would take a spot and hold his ground until it came right, choose the most advantageous way to go even if it meant going off course. Without him we wouldn't have won because we would not have mastered the short course tactics in the way he could.

And things started to come together. Everything went up a beat.

The boat started to produce real upwind speed in the flatter water. Merit Cup simply took off. We noticed that some of the other boats had very few crew on deck, they were allowing them to take some rest below. We had been in a normal watch system since the start of the leg, as I said we would be, and so had been able to pick up some rest.

But for the last 24 hours, when we moved from thinking we might just protect third place to thinking we might be in with the chance of a win, we had everyone on deck nearly all the time. The helmsmen were given occasional rests. When we could let someone below for an hour or two, we did.

There is nothing like coming down the coast of New Zealand where we know every inch of the route. We hardly need charts at all and we all know the distances between every headland as we counted them down to the entry to Auckland Harbour.

From being the pursuer we became the pursued. I think I prefer to be the pursuer. All the time the wind, coming unusually from the south, built up to 40 knots. That

meant additional worry about damage to the boat as well as fears that the rougher conditions would suit our attackers more than us, because we have a narrower, and therefore less stable, hull.

But the guys were aware this was an important result for us. It repositions the campaign on a more credible platform. It meant we could arrive home in Auckland and hold our heads high as we renewed links with friends and family, instead of having to make excuses. We have done that, and we have moved to second overall.

The boat was generally calm, but my heart was in my mouth right until the moment when we crossed the finish line. And at that point, making the last tack, we blew the mainsail. If that had happened just a few minutes earlier it would have cost us victory.

In 1994 we beat Chris Dickson home by two minutes and 38 seconds. This time we have beaten Dennis Conner's Toshiba by two minutes and 36 seconds. We know that this race is still wide open, but no one can take away the boost to our confidence which this win has given us.

My claim to free cocaine was based on Walrus' belief that I had starred in the film of Scarface

Surf culture in Hawaii is inextricably bound up with drugs. Local methods of dealing with the big wave vary from marijuana to cocaine via crystal methamphetamine.

"Hey, bra, can I use your phone?" I'd never seen the guy before when he put his tanned, stubby head round the door.

"It's OK, I'm a friend of Hank's." I told him to come in and prayed he wasn't calling China.

"Bra, that showed real aloha," he said, putting the phone down. He unzipped his backpack and took out a transparent sack, containing the fruits of an abundant marijuana harvest. "Here, take one of these - consider it a Christmas present." He laid a "bud" on the table, the size of a small cauliflower. "Wow, it's a big one! Your lucky day."

The North Shore bartering system was alive and well. Within the hour, that bud had been incinerated by a small hut dedicated band of surfers.

A couple of weeks later, it was my birthday and I was sucking down yet another Bud - a Budweiser - at Portofino's in Haleiwa, a whimsical Wild West town of saloons and surf shops along the Kamehameha Highway. The owner of a local surfwear company drove me away into the darkness and parked on an obscure bluff. Then he took out a small packet, emptied out a pyramid of white powder on to a square of card, and handed me a rolled-up tube of paper. "Got it for nothing from 'Walrus' when he heard it was your birthday. Go for it."

My entitlement to free cocaine was based, it transpired, on a case of mistaken identity: Walrus believed that I had starred in the film *Scarface* and was lying low in Hawaii under cover of an alias.

Nevertheless, a fair cross-section of illegal substances are freely available on the North Shore.

A lot of surfers swear by "kryppie" (high quality marijuana): all that inhaling is supposed to increase your lung capacity and thus ability to survive wipeouts. Smoke relaxes you and slows you down; coke, on the other hand, speeds you up. Thus the idea is born that some cunning combination of the two is the perfect panacea for all surfing problems. One cures the anxiety and curbs the fear; the other facilitates power moves. No one, so far as I know, bothers with steroids.

Ken Bradshaw, the big-wave bell man, notorious (in North Shore terms) for his disciplined clean living, subscribes to the performance-enhancement theory, but from the opposite side of the fence. "I'd like to see drug-testing," he said, "because it'd make the playing-field more level."

But surfing is too much of a free-form activity for that. Everyone's afraid of a kind of Third Reich mentality. In fact, drug-testing is now being brought in by the Association of Surfing Professionals in professional contests.

Kryppie is still cultivated in secret locations around the Islands and smoking it is held to be a virtually sacred obligation on the North Shore.

It is like supporting local industry. A recent *LA Times* report, warmly welcomed here, to the effect that 70 per cent of American basketballers puff

and that the idea of banning the substance was therefore unworkable, gives a rough guide to the North Shore's sense of how many locals partake of the weed. Except that that "70" quickly became inflated to "90".

In the oral history of the North Shore, the legend persists that for most of the 70s and 80s everyone survived around here by purveying marijuana to one another. In reality there was inevitably a pyramid, with one man making a lot of dough out of a lot of dopeheads.

I was once naive enough to contemplate writing an article about the local drugs baron, then going through the courts, now a thoroughly respectable citizen. Somehow word that I was doing a "Mr Big" story got around. Pretty soon I was being visited by a couple of heavy dudes, one of whom was known as "Sharky", and both of whom the word "henchman" fitted like a glove, who made it plain that, unless I had an overpowering desire to see a shotgun shoved down my throat, I might care to reconsider. It was around this same time that I started to feel that, what the hell, it was not such a great story after all and that the world would be a finer place without it.

Pro-smokers often despise other substances. Billy, a coke-head, dropped by Dan's house on New Year to inquire if, perchance, anyone could kindly spare a gram. Billy's beloved baseball cap was ripped from his head and torn to pieces. "Don't come round here again," yelled Dan, "or next time that'll be you on the floor!" Billy withdrew, with apologies.

But Dan needed an outside referee to calm him down afterwards. Coke users, in turn, heap contempt on crystal methamphetamine, considered the root of all evil out on the break.

"Had to come in," groaned one surfer hitting the beach at Ali'i Beach Park recently. "Got hit by some kamikaze."

"Who was it?" asked a sympathiser. "Dunno," came the reply. "Been doing too much crystal for sure though."

A doctor in the psychiatric ward of the Kahuku Hospital blamed relatively high drug use - and youth delinquency - on what she called "North Shore neurosis". Anywhere else you can just be normally unhappy, she argued, whereas here you are not only unhappy but guilty about being unhappy but guilty about being unhappy to boot, since in Hawaii happiness is a cultural imperative; and if you add to that being broke, when prosperity is next to Godliness in America, then you are doubly damned.

There is a forthcoming "Surfers for Christ" contest on the island of Kauai, where participants are vowing to "stand up for Christ" and "declare against drugs". Their plan is to paddle out en masse and - for once - not grab anyone else's wave and just sit there beaming, so that other less altruistic surfers will feel the full force of their superhuman charity.

In this event you get scored for virtue rather than style. But, ironically, the reason so many turn to drugs is because surfing is like a theology and promises more than it can ever deliver. The perfect wave - and sometimes even the imperfect wave - is as elusive as God and its absence induces a void that has to be filled somehow. Some get religion, others get high.

Smith needs a leg up after another limp performance

The cover over the tattered mainsail of Lawrie Smith's Silk Cut was like a purple shroud after what was supposed to be Britain's best shot at a Whitbread Race win in many a long year finished sixth in Auckland yesterday. Along with two fourths and a seventh, the latest result pushed Smith's big-money campaign into seventh place overall.

While saying that he would not make changes, that a run of poor results can be followed by a run of good ones, Smith is facing a dilemma of the kind he does not like. The ques-

tion is how to inject new spark into a crew while remaining true to his first instincts which are to be totally loyal.

However, a turnaround there must be if Smith is to maintain not only the credibility of his Whitbread campaign, but the America's Cup syndicate he hopes will represent Britain here in New Zealand in two years' time.

Smith's mood was not helped by a two-hour limp across the finish line at Orakei Wharf caused by a shackle which exploded 12 miles from

home, leaving the headsail to flog itself loose and trash the mainsail.

There were no such problems for the overall leader, Paul Cayard, who knew that a middle-order result would consolidate his position. EF Language finished 24 minutes behind the leg-winner Merit Cup, but fourth place keeps Cayard comfortably ahead in the points and ready to put on more pressure in the fifth, 6,670-mile leg round Cape Horn to Brazil.

The only cloud for Cayard was a protest lodged by Toshiba's skipper, Dennis Conner, who accused EF of

failing to show navigation lights at dusk. For the first time in this race, the international jury will have to jet in to deliberate.

Free of all worries was Grant Dalton. To be first into his home port after a gripping duel with Toshiba left the 40-year-old skipper's confidence restored and his pride immense. Not that he was alone in feeling considerable satisfaction. The Maryland businessman George Collins was again full of praise for helmsman John Kostecki after a second consecutive third place. Collins knows that he has

a programme good enough to match his commercially sponsored rivals, but, like Smith, he also knows that the climb to the top is steep.

WHITBREAD ROUND THE WORLD RACE (fourth leg, 1,270 miles, Sydney to Auckland): 1 Merit Cup (Monaco) G Dalton 4 days 22w 16m 50s; 2 Toshiba (USA) D Conner +5m 20s; 3 Chessie Racing (USA) G Collins +12; 4 EF Language (Swiss) P Cayard +24; 5 Swedish Match (Swiss) G Kuentz +41; 6 Silk Cut (GB) L Smith +51w 11m; 7 Innovation Kvaerner (Nor) K Frostad +3:22; 8 Brunel Surfer (Netherlands) H Heuer +5:58; 9 EF Education (Swiss) G Sulou +9:05.

Overall: 1 EF Language 372 pts; 2 Merit Cup 333; 3 Swedish Match 313; 4 Innovation Kvaerner 307; 5 Toshiba 298; 6 Chessie Racing 284; 7 Silk Cut 258; 8 EF Education 100; 9 Brunel Surfer 95.

— Stuart Alexander
Auckland

Incredible flight offer: Europe from £34 return

easyJet

The Independent and Independent on Sunday, in association with easyJet are offering readers the chance to fly to Europe from an incredible £34 return or £22 one way (all prices include airport tax).

This offer is available all summer long between 21 February and 4 September 1998. Choose from Barcelona, Nice, Amsterdam, Geneva or Palma and in Scotland, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen or Inverness. Flights to all destinations are from London Luton, while you can also travel to Nice and Amsterdam from Liverpool airport as well.

If you live in Scotland you can fly from any of the Scottish airports mentioned above, to London Luton from £34 return (including airport tax).

The prices for travel are divided into three bands - travel between February 21st and March 28th are one band, while travel between March 29th and September 4th is divided into peak and off peak travel. If you want to travel off peak then use the grid to advise you of the best times to fly.

The price grid shows the cost of a one way flight to each destination. If you choose to travel to a particular destination in band A, then you may find it is a different price to bands B or C.

HOW TO BOOK

Simply collect 12 differently numbered tokens from The Independent and Independent on Sunday (You must have 2 tokens from The Independent on Sunday, tokens will be printed until Friday January 23rd).

Decide when and where you want to travel. You can book for up to five people with the one set of tokens as long as all passengers are travelling together. You can book up to two separate single or return journeys for up to 5 people - but each application must be accompanied by 12 differently numbered tokens.

On Saturday 24th January we will print a telephone number which you will use to book your flight.

You must book at least 3 weeks before you fly.

You will need to keep hold of your tokens as you will need to present them at the airport when you fly.

For more information call the special phone line 0870 60 60 737



Amsterdam: One of five European destinations available

Destinations and single flight prices including tax

| DESTINATION | BAND A FEB 21 - MARCH 28 Outbound (£) Inbound (£) | | BAND B MARCH 29 - SEPT 4 OFF-PEAK Outbound (£) Inbound (£) | | BAND C MARCH 29 - SEPT 4 PEAK Outbound (£) Inbound (£) | |
|-------------|---|-------------|---|-------------|---|-------------|
| | Outbound (£) | Inbound (£) | Outbound (£) | Inbound (£) | Outbound (£) | Inbound (£) |
| Barcelona | 22.00 | 12.00 | 34.50 | 24.50 | 39.50 | 29.50 |
| Palma | 22.00 | 12.00 | 29.50 | 19.50 | 44.50 | 34.50 |
| Nice | 22.00 | 14.70 | 24.50 | 17.20 | 39.50 | 32.20 |
| Amsterdam | 22.00 | 15.20 | 24.50 | 17.70 | 34.50 | 27.70 |
| Geneva | 22.00 | 19.00 | 24.50 | 21.50 | 34.50 | 31.50 |
| Edinburgh | 22.00 | 12.00 | 22.00 | 12.00 | 24.50 | 14.50 |
| Aberdeen | 22.00 | 12.00 | 22.00 | 12.00 | 24.50 | 14.50 |
| Glasgow | 22.00 | 12.00 | 22.00 | 12.00 | 24.50 | 14.50 |
| Inverness | 22.00 | 12.00 | 22.00 | 12.00 | 24.50 | 14.50 |

*Prices from London Luton and Liverpool are the same.

To calculate the return price add the outbound and inbound fares together.

Flights between 29 March and 4 September have different prices for peak and off-peak travel. If you want to travel off-peak, choose to travel at less popular times. This guide will help.

OFF-PEAK TIME ADVICE GUIDE

There are only very few off peak flights in July and August. Weekend flights will be very popular - be prepared to take alternative mid week flights.

If offer fares are not available at a particular time, a normal priced seat can be bought in conjunction with an offer seat.

There are no off-peak seats available on popular flights such as bank holiday weekends.

Here's more specific advice for more popular destinations

Barcelona: There are no off-peak flights in July or August.

Palma: July and August are especially popular.

Nice: Off-peak travel is only available in April.

Geneva: Saturday travel before Easter is especially popular.

Inverness: There is no off-peak travel in August.

Exclusions: You cannot fly with our offer during these times:

All destinations: 9-14 April; 1-4 May; 22-25 May; 28-31 August.

Liverpool-Nice: 2-4 March; 20-23 May; 14 June.

Nice-Liverpool: 4-6 March; 25-28 May; 16 June.

London Luton-Nice: 3-4 March; 20-23 May; 13-14 June.

Nice-London Luton: 24-26 May; 18 June.

London Luton-Edinburgh: 22-23 March.

Edinburgh-London Luton: 22-23 March.

London Luton-Barcelona: 7-10 May.

Barcelona-London Luton: 10-11 May.

You cannot travel on flights scheduled to depart after 2pm on Fridays and Sundays.

| Day of travel | London Luton to Edinburgh | | Edinburgh to London Luton | |
|---------------|---------------------------|------|---------------------------|------|
| | Dep. | Arr. | Dep. | Arr. |
| Mon-Friday | 0710 | 0625 | 0715 | 0635 |
| Mon-Friday | 0820 | 0935 | 0825 | 0945 |
| Mon-Friday | 1515 | 1825 | 1520 | 1835 |
| Mon-Friday | 1825 | 1940 | 1830 | 1945 |
| Mon-Friday | 2100 | 2210 | 2105 | 2210 |
| Saturday | 0820 | 0935 | 0825 | 0935 |
| Saturday | 1715 | 1825 | 1720 | 1835 |
| Saturday | 2025 | 2135 | 2030 | 2145 |
| Sunday | 0820 | 0935 | 0825 | 0935 |
| Sunday | 1405 | 1520 | 1410 | 1525 |
| Sunday | 1725 | 1835 | 1730 | 1845 |
| Sunday | 2035 | 2145 | 2040 | 2155 |

| Day of travel | London Luton to Palma | | Palma to London Luton | |
|---------------|-----------------------|------|-----------------------|------|
| | Dep. | Arr. | Dep. | Arr. |
| Mon-Friday | 1140 | 1805 | 1145 | 1715 |
| Saturday | 1140 | 1805 | 1145 | 1715 |
| Sunday | 1140 | 1805 | 1145 | 1715 |

| Day of travel | London Luton to Nice | | Nice to London Luton | |
|---------------|----------------------|------|----------------------|------|
| | Dep. | Arr. | Dep. | Arr. |
| Mon-Friday | 0705 | 1005 | 0710 | 1045 |
| Mon-Friday | 1225 | 1525 | 1230 | 1605 |
| Mon-Friday | 1805 | 1905 | 1810 | 1945 |
| Mon-Friday | 2005 | 2105 | 2010 | 2145 |
| Saturday | 0705 | 1005 | 0710 | 1045 |
| Saturday | 1225 | 1525 | 1230 | 1605 |
| Saturday | 1805 | 1905 | 1810 | 1945 |
| Saturday | 2005 | 2105 | 2010 | 2145 |
| Sunday | 0705 | 1005 | 0710 | 1045 |
| Sunday | 1225 | 1525 | 1230 | 1605 |
| Sunday | 1805 | 1905 | 1810 | 1945 |
| Sunday | 2005 | 2105 | 2010 | 2145 |

| Day of travel | London Luton to Glasgow | | Glasgow to London Luton | |
|---------------|-------------------------|------|-------------------------|------|
| | Dep. | Arr. | Dep. | Arr. |
| Mon-Friday | 0715 | 0930 | 0720 | 0935 |
| Mon-Friday | 1515 | 1630 | 1520 | 1635 |
| Mon-Friday | 1825 | 1940 | 1830 | 1945 |
| Mon-Friday | 2130 | 2245 | 2135 | 2250 |
| Saturday | 0815 | 0930 | 0820 | 0935 |
| Saturday | 1830 | 1945 | 1835 | 2000 |
| Saturday | 2045 | 2200 | 2050 | 2215 |
| Sunday | 0815 | 0930 | 0820 | 0935 |
| Sunday | 1830 | 1945 | 1835 | 2000 |
| Sunday | 2045 | 2200 | 2050 | 2215 |

| Day of travel | London Luton to Inverness | | Inverness to London Luton | |
|---------------|---------------------------|------|---------------------------|------|
| | Dep. | Arr. | Dep. | Arr. |
| Mon-Friday | 1135 | 1305 | 1140 | 1315 |
| Saturday | 1225 | 1340 | 1230 | 1345 |
| Sunday | 1225 | 1340 | 1230 | 1345 |

| Day of travel | London Luton to Barcelona | | Barcelona to London Luton | |
|---------------|---------------------------|------|---------------------------|------|
| | Dep. | Arr. | Dep. | Arr. |
| Mon-Friday | 1030 | 1335 | 1035 | 1345 |
| Saturday | 1140 | 1450 | 1145 | 1500 |
| Sunday | 1030 | 1335 | 1035 | 1345 |
| Sunday | 1740 | 2045 | 1745 | 2100 |

| Day of travel | Liverpool to Amsterdam | | Amsterdam to Liverpool | |
|---------------|------------------------|------|------------------------|------|
| | Dep. | Arr. | Dep. | Arr. |
| Mon-Friday | 0710 | 0930 | 0715 | 0935 |
| Saturday | 0820 | 1040 | 0825 | 1045 |
| Sunday | 0820 | 1040 | 0825 | 1045 |

| Day of travel | London Luton to Aberdeen | | Aberdeen to London Luton | |
|---------------|--------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|
| | Dep. | Arr. | Dep. | Arr. |
| Mon-Friday | 0715 | 0930 | 0720 | 0935 |
| Mon-Friday | 1515 | 1630 | 1520 | 1635 |
| Mon-Friday | 1825 | 1940 | 1830 | 1945 |
| Mon-Friday | 2130 | 2245 | 2135 | 2250 |
| Saturday | 0815 | 0930 | 0820 | 0935 |
| Saturday | 1830 | 1945 | 1835 | 2000 |
| Saturday | 2045 | 2200 | 2050 | 2215 |
| Sunday | 0815 | 0930 | 0820 | 0935 |
| Sunday | 1830 | 1945 | 1835 | 2000 |
| Sunday | 2045 | 2200 | 2050 | 2215 |

| Day of travel | London Luton to Amsterdam | | Amsterdam to London Luton | |
|---------------|---------------------------|------|---------------------------|------|
| | Dep. | Arr. | Dep. | Arr. |
| Mon-Friday | 0710 | 0930 | 0715 | 0935 |
| Mon-Friday | 1510 | 1630 | 1515 | 1635 |
| Mon-Friday | 1820 | 1940 | 1825 | 1945 |
| Mon-Friday | 2130 | 2245 | 2135 | 2250 |
| Saturday | 0810 | 0930 | 0815 | 0935 |
| Saturday | 1820 | 1940 | 1825 | 1945 |
| Saturday | 2030 | 2145 | 2035 | 2200 |
| Sunday | 0810 | 0930 | 0815 | 0935 |
| Sunday | 1820 | 1940 | 1825 | 1945 |
| Sunday | 2030 | 2145 | 2035 | 2200 |

| Day of travel | London Luton to Geneva | | Geneva to London Luton | |
|---------------|------------------------|------|------------------------|------|
| | Dep. | Arr. | Dep. | Arr. |
| Mon-Friday | 0710 | 0930 | 0715 | 0935 |
| Mon-Friday | 1510 | 1630 | 1515 | 1635 |
| Mon-Friday | 1820 | 1940 | 1825 | 1945 |
| Mon-Friday | 2130 | 2245 | 2135 | 2250 |
| Saturday | 0810 | 0930 | 0815 | 0935 |
| Saturday | 1820 | 1940 | 1825 | 1945 |
| Saturday | 2030 | 2145 | 2035 | 2200 |
| Sunday | 0810 | 0930 | 0815 | 0935 |
| Sunday | 1820 | 1940 | 1825 | 1945 |
| Sunday | 2030 | 2145 | 2035 | 2200 |

| Day of travel | London Luton to Barcelona | | Barcelona to London Luton | |
|---------------|---------------------------|------|---------------------------|------|
| | Dep. | Arr. | Dep. | Arr. |
| Mon-Friday | 0710 | 0930 | 0715 | 0935 |
| Mon-Friday | 1510 | 1630 | 1515 | 1635 |
| Mon-Friday | 1820 | 1940 | 1825 | 1945 |
| Mon-Friday | 2130 | 2245 | 2135 | 2250 |
| Saturday | 0810 | 0930 | 0815 | 0935 |
| Saturday | 1820 | 1940 | 1825 | 1945 |
| Saturday | 2030 | 2145 | 2035 | 2200 |
| Sunday | 0810 | 0930 | 0815 | 0935 |
| Sunday | 1820 | 1940 | 1825 | 1945 |
| Sunday | 2030 | 2145 | 2035 | 2200 |

| Day of travel | Liverpool to Amsterdam | | Amsterdam to Liverpool | |
|---------------|------------------------|------|------------------------|------|
| | Dep. | Arr. | Dep. | Arr. |
| Mon-Friday | 0710 | 0930 | 0715 | 0935 |
| Saturday | 0820 | 1040 | 0825 | 1045 |
| Sunday | 0820 | 1040 | 0825 | 1045 |

| Day of travel | London Luton to Edinburgh | | Edinburgh to London Luton | |
|---------------|---------------------------|------|---------------------------|------|
| | Dep. | Arr. | Dep. | Arr. |
| Mon-Friday | 0715 | 0930 | 0720 | 0935 |
| Mon-Friday | 1515 | 1630 | 1520 | 1635 |
| Mon-Friday | 1825 | 1940 | 1830 | 1945 |
| Mon-Friday | 2130 | 2245 | 2135 | 2250 |
| Saturday | 0815 | 0930 | 0820 | 0935 |
| Saturday | 1830 | 1945 | 1835 | 2000 |
| Saturday | 2045 | 2200 | 2050 | 2215 |
| Sunday | 0815 | 0930 | 0820 | 0935 |
| Sunday | 1830 | 1945 | 1835 | 2000 |
| Sunday | 2045 | 2200 | 2050 | 2215 |

| Day of travel | London Luton to Palma | | Palma to London Luton | |
|---------------|-----------------------|------|-----------------------|------|
| | Dep. | Arr. | Dep. | Arr. |
| Mon-Friday | 1140 | 1805 | 1145 | 1715 |
| Saturday | 1140 | 1805 | 1145 | 1715 |
| Sunday | 1140 | 1805 | 1145 | 1715 |

| Day of travel | London Luton to Amsterdam | | Amsterdam to London Luton | |
|---------------|---------------------------|------|---------------------------|------|
| | Dep. | Arr. | Dep. | Arr. |
| Mon-Friday | 0710 | 0930 | 0715 | 0935 |
| Mon-Friday | 1510 | 1630 | 1515 | 1635 |
| Mon-Friday | 1820 | 1940 | 1825 | 1945 |
| Mon-Friday | 2130 | 2245 | 2135 | 2250 |
| Saturday | 0810 | 0930 | 0815 | 0935 |
| Saturday | 1820 | 1940 | 1825 | 1945 |
| Saturday | 2030 | 2145 | 2035 | 2200 |
| Sunday | 0810 | 0930 | 0815 | 0935 |
| Sunday | 1820 | 1940 | 1825 | 1945 |
| Sunday | 2030 | 2145 | 2035 | 2200 |

| Day of travel | London Luton to Barcelona | | Barcelona to London Luton | |
|---------------|---------------------------|------|---------------------------|------|
| | Dep. | Arr. | Dep. | Arr. |
| Mon-Friday | 0710 | 0930 | 0715 | 0935 |
| Mon-Friday | 1510 | 1630 | 1515 | 1635 |
| Mon-Friday | 1820 | 1940 | 1825 | 1945 |
| Mon-Friday | 2130 | 2245 | 2135 | 2250 |
| Saturday | 0810 | 0930 | 0815 | 0935 |
| Saturday | 1820 | 1940 | 1825 | 1945 |
| Saturday | 2030 | 2145 | 2035 | 2200 |
| Sunday | 0810 | 0930 | 0815 | 0935 |
| Sunday | 1820 | 1940 | 1825 | 1945 |
| Sunday | 2030 | 2145 | 2035 | 2200 |

| Day of travel | Liverpool to Amsterdam | | Amsterdam to Liverpool | |
|---------------|------------------------|------|------------------------|------|
| | Dep. | Arr. | Dep. | Arr. |
| Mon-Friday | 0710 | 0930 | 0715 | 0935 |
| Saturday | 0820 | 1040 | 0825 | 1045 |
| Sunday | 0820 | 1040 | 0825 | 1045 |

| Day of travel | London Luton to Glasgow | | Glasgow to London Luton | |
|---------------|-------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|
| | Flt No. | Dep. Arr. | Flt No. | Dep. Arr. |
| Mon-Friday | 0715 | 0814 0927 | 072 | 0930 0744 |
| Mon-Friday | 0713 | 1458 1612 | 074 | 0947 1058 |
| Mon-Friday | 0718 | 1917 1928 | 076 | 1632 1747 |
| Mon-Friday | 0719 | 0930 1040 | 078 | 1048 1158 |



Amateurs fly the flag

The official history of the Oxford and Cambridge Golf Society, recently published, is subtitled "100 years of serious fun". It depends what you mean by fun. This week's tornado would have been right up their fairway. The old Oxbridge Blues have been battling the elements in the President's Putter at Rye in the first week of the New Year for more than 70 years. This year, play started on Thursday and the final takes place tomorrow.

Never cancelled in peacetime, the event, sometimes has to be postponed, as the latter stages were last year, and was once moved to Littlestone in 1963. They fly in from all over the world to delight in donning two bobble hats and as many sweaters as can be worn without hindering the swing completely, and are never happier than when the flagstick attains a horizontal position.

Long gone are the days when some of the finest amateur players in the country were eligible to compete, but the former England cricket captain Ted Dexter is a past champion. "We must be mad to be out here thinking we are enjoying ourselves," he said last year, slightly letting down the side.

Part of the attraction, of course, is recovering afterwards in the Rye clubhouse, a wonderful example of the traditional type. A concession has had to be made for the only woman to have played in the Varsity Match to be allowed into the gentlemen's bar, but it has not bothered Fiona McDonald. A few years ago, as an honorary male for the week, she ended up marrying a fellow Light Blue.

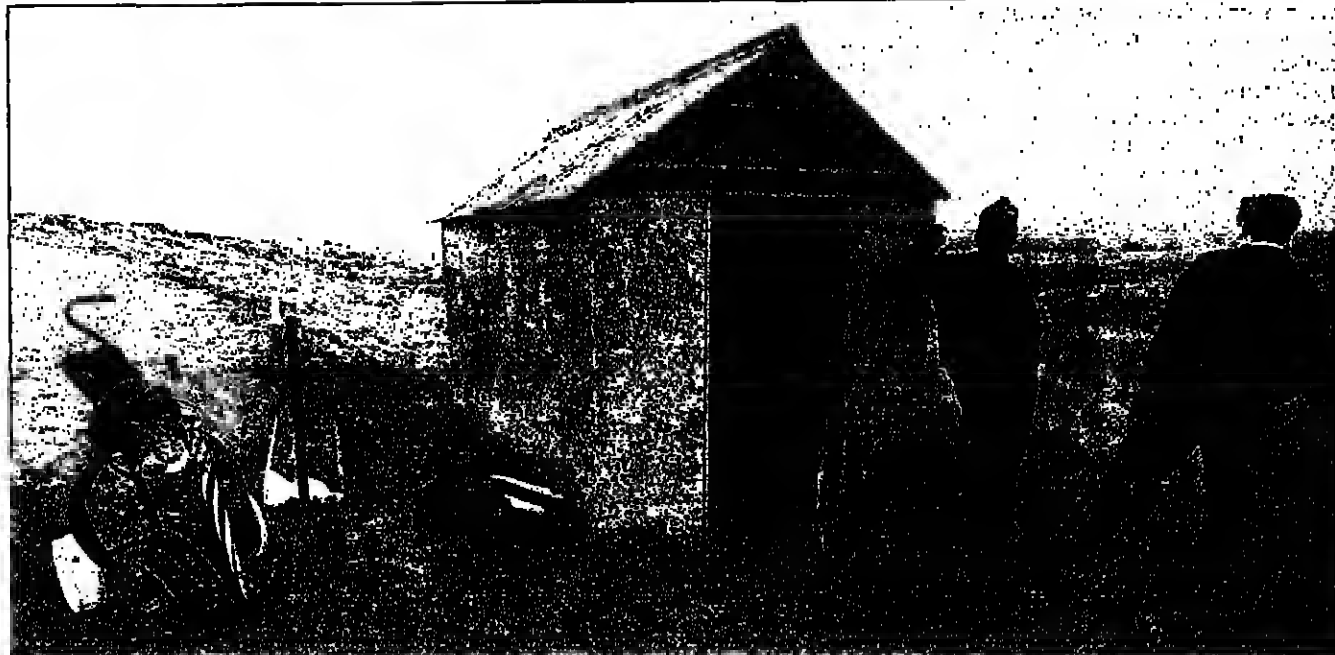
— Andy Farrell



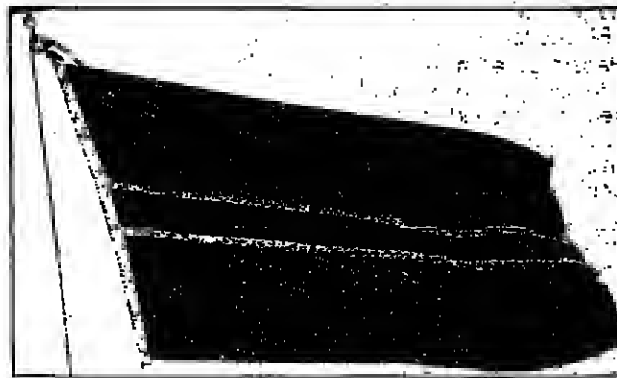
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID ASHDOWN



Pictures hanging in the clubhouse of the first President's Putter to be played at Rye, on 28 March 1911



The ball used by each year's winner is hung from putters artistically, if somewhat oddly, displayed in the clubhouse (left). The flag of the Oxford and Cambridge Golf Society flies in a typical breeze over the clubhouse (right)



■ Copies of these photographs – and any others by the Independent's sports photographers David Ashdown, Peter Jay and Robert Hallam – can be ordered by telephoning 0171-293 2534.

Bullimor



CHRIS MAUME

SPORT ON TV

Woodward recruits

The Woodward says he has his England squads in form – a commodity Jeremy Guscott is seriously short of, thanks to the back problems that have prevented him playing this season. For at least the Bath field centre is in the line for next month's Six Nations' opener at France. A good job he says.

High confidence 'little spat' with

The Woodward says he has his England squads in form – a commodity Jeremy Guscott is seriously short of, thanks to the back problems that have prevented him playing this season. For at least the Bath field centre is in the line for next month's Six Nations' opener at France. A good job he says.

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God's own coach on a mission of mercy for the lad Heckinbottom

THE
GAFFER
TAPES

We received a postcard at the Old Cornfield this morning, from Goa. Nothing strange in that – the office staff are always doing this in the winter, letting us know that while we are struggling around the garden recovering laundry after the gales, or sliding across black ice into the neighbour's MGF, they are sunning themselves on some beach leering at the talent.

However, this postcard came not from one of our wannabe Shirley Valentines but from Brian Heckinbottom, our blunt instrument of a centre-forward who's supposed to be battering defenders on our behalf this afternoon. In a way it's a relief; at least we know where he is. Ever since the normally reliable Mancunian failed to make training on Monday we've been worried about him.

We checked the obvious – wife, mum, credit card agency,

his tab at the Mop & Bucket – and the signs looked bad. All his bills had been paid up to date on Sunday, while both his women had been told he was going away on a club tour. We began to fear he'd jumped into the Sludgethorpe Canal and were about to ask the cops to dredge it when the postcard arrived.

It seems he wants to find himself and is considering giving up the game and become a hippy. His failure to make the Jamaican World Cup squad appears to hit him hard. Despite being no more Jamaican than William Hague (wearing a baseball cap at the Notting Hill carnival, having "One Love" on CD, etc) he saw it as his last chance of international football.

It's a savage blow for the club. He, Fritz Unstutz and Ego Massive had struck up a fine partnership up front. Brian would cow the defence into

submission with a well-timed (i.e. when the ball was at the other end) elbow and Fritz and Ego would take advantage.

In desperation we've turned to God – well, his right-hand man. Glenn Hoddle is flying out tomorrow. As the FA's counsellor-in-chief he felt he had a responsibility to answer the call. He's going to commune with Brian and try and raise his karma over a kilo (Glenn promised Graham Kelly he won't inhale). Naturally, half a dozen backs have wangled a trip on expenses to follow the "story" but Glenn's hoping to shake them off.

He's dedicated and, if he has to, he's prepared to bring Brian into the England squad to lure him back. This is a great gesture, but we're hoping he doesn't actually have to pick him as that means we'll have to pay Whippet Athletic, his former club, an extra £250,000 as part of the transfer deal.

In the meantime I'm following up a lead from Ego about a hard-man striker he knows in Central America called Che Revolva. Apparently Barcelona, Real Madrid and Juventus have all been trailing him but there are complications, so we may be able to nip in.

On the credit side the work permit for Sweetie Bettie, Fritz's personal tea lady, has come through so Fritz is staying. The Ministry of Employment had been dealing with some Swiss PE teacher but they dropped everything when Sweetie made her personal approach. They obviously liked her as she's also got permission to do some modelling, and she had a picture shoot yesterday for the *The Moon* magazine. I think she could be a good signing, especially as she's agreed to service the ref at home games as well as Fritz.

Meanwhile we were on the wrong end of a shock in last week's FA Cup, winning 3-0 away to another Premiership side. Shaun Prone scored a hat-trick with all three goals set up by Ivor Niggle. This opened up all manner of fourth-round nightmares, but we've managed to avoid Stevenage, or the prospect of playing Hereford or Cheltenham. Instead we've drawn a respectable First Division team away from home, the sort you can lose to without disgrace.

But it's back to the league this week and, typically, the Prone-Niggle partnership is back in the sick room. Prone's got a swollen head while Niggle has a punctured ego after the chairman turned down his request for a bonus with the response that he "wouldn't get a bean until he went a month without injury".

Barry Gaffer was talking to Glenn Moore

Kendall slates Spurs over transfer rebuff

Howard Kendall, the Everton manager, has criticised Tottenham following the collapse of Andy Hinchcliffe's £3m move to White Hart Lane. The England international was sent back to Goodison Park on Thursday after it was revealed he is suffering from an Achilles injury.

"The whole affair has been like an Brian Rix farce," Kendall said. "The way things have been conducted is not at all professional. Having gone so far down the road to signing the player, to pull out just because he may possibly be unavailable for one match is absolute nonsense."

Everton are incensed with suggestions from Spurs that they

deceived the Londoners over Hinchcliffe's fitness, amid claims that an extra payment on the fee had been agreed as long as Hinchcliffe was not cup-tied by playing for Everton last weekend against Newcastle. Spurs pulled back from the deal because they wanted Hinchcliffe to play for them at Manchester United today, claiming he would not have been fit. Everton denied knowledge of any such arrangement.

As Christian Gross's shopping expedition continues, Juventus's Portuguese left-back, Manuel Dimas, is the Tottenham manager's latest quarry. Spurs have approached the Italians with an offer for the 28-year-old de-

fender and were close to agreeing a £2m deal.

Dimas, who joined Juventus from Benfica a year ago, played for Juve in the opening Champions' League qualifiers, but was then left out of the side when Mauro Tomicelli returned from injury.

Ruud Gullit has rounded on his Norwegian goalkeeper, Frode Grodas. Despite winning an FA Cup winner's medal in May, the 33-year-old has not even been on the bench this season. "I told him at the beginning of the season that I wasn't happy with him," the Chelsea manager said. The club has put Grodas up for sale, but have received no offers.

"It's not our fault," Gullit said. "Nobody wants him. That says something about how he played last season. You'll have to ask him why he's staying. Maybe it's the money. If he doesn't want to go, we can't do anything."

Another goalkeeper with problems is Bernard Lama, who may be on his way out of Upton Park without playing a game for West Ham. The French goalkeeper needs first team football to enhance his chances of making the France World Cup squad, but manager Harry Redknapp refuses to drop the in-form Craig Forrest. Lama could well look elsewhere, and Redknapp said: "I don't know how long he'll stay if he doesn't play."

— Alan Nixon

Keane out for rest of the season

Roy Keane will not return this season for Manchester United even though he is recovering well from his knee injury. The Republic of Ireland midfielder has been swimming and cycling to build up the strength in his injured knee following his cruciate ligament operation last year.

This week Keane began jogging for the first time since he suffered the injury, against Leeds in September.

The United manager, Alex Ferguson, confirmed that the 26-year-old was making good progress, but said he would not be rushed back. Keane is due to begin full training in

April before returning to action for the start of next season. "Roy's doing light jogging now – that's all," Ferguson said. "The schedule doesn't change and it will still be April before he starts full training and he won't be back before the start of next season."

The Aston Villa midfielder Sasa Curcic is to have talks with Besiktas coach John Toshack this weekend about a possible move to the Turkish club. The Villa manager, Brian Little, said that Villa have received an approach for Curcic, who has had an unhappy time since his £4m move 17 months ago.

SCOTTISH LEAGUE

Farry prepared to punish Gascoigne

Jim Farry, the Scottish Football Association chief executive, has given the strongest indication yet that Paul Gascoigne could still be punished for his flute-playing antics.

Gascoigne was caught on camera impersonating a flute player as he warmed up during the second half at the Old Firm game on New Year's Day.

Farry is threatening to discipline Rangers and the England midfielder unless the Scottish champions take appropriate action. He also suggests the club

should make the punishment public.

"Gascoigne's action was unprofessional and inflammatory," Farry said. "Having been down this road before I wonder to what extent the association's signals to club and player have been heeded. If necessary then I am in no doubt that the association will bring this message home graphically."

Michael O'Neill is ready to make his debut for Aberdeen at Ibrox today after the Northern Ireland midfielder came

through a reserve match on Wednesday unscathed.

O'Neill joined the Dons on a three-month loan deal from Coventry last week but was unable to play because his clearance had not been received in time.

Dunfermline face bottom club Hibernian at Easter Road without a win since the middle of November but their assistant manager, Dick Campbell, remains optimistic. "We know that a couple of wins will send us back up the table and that is what we are striving for," he said.



Tottenham's Jürgen Klinsmann (left) trains with his new team-mate, Nicola Berté, in preparation for this afternoon's match at Manchester United. Photograph: AP

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE

Emerson staying at Boro

The long-running saga of Emerson's future at Middlebrough took a new turn yesterday when Bryan Robson, his manager, said there was no truth in a report that his Brazilian midfielder had signed for Fiorentina.

Robson said the report was "absolute rubbish." Emerson has been fined and dropped by the First Division leaders after returning late from a Christmas holiday in Brazil while he was serving a suspension.

Middlesbrough face a tough test of their promotion credentials today when they travel to Charlton, who have climbed to fourth in the table. Clayton Blackmore, who missed the first half of the season with a stress fracture, is pushing for a place in Middlesbrough's line-up. Gianluca Festa is suspended. Curtis Fleming is out after having

an appendicitis operation and Anthony Ormerod returns after recovering from groin trouble.

Charlton must decide whether to play Bradley Allen or Mark Bright following Carl Leaburn's move to Wimbledon. Matt Holmes has recovered from injury but lacks match fitness and will be a substitute.

Nottingham Forest, in second place, welcome back Pierre Van Hooijdonk. Steve Stone and Andy Johnson for the visit of Port Vale. Jon Hjelde is out with a hamstring strain and Colin Cooper returns to centre-back. The Port Vale full-back Matt Carragher has been ruled out after suffering a recurrence of a stomach strain.

Frank Clark could hand the captain's armband for today's match at Portsmouth to his former Pompey player, Kit Symons, who lost the captaincy

a month ago. Kevin Horlock and Gerard Wiekens have been injured while in charge. Richard Edgill is in contention to reclaim his right-back place after serving out his suspension. Adrian Whitbread and David Hillier are fit again for Portsmouth.

Sunderland will name an unchanged team for the ninth time in succession as they look to avenge their defeat on the opening day of the season at Bramall Lane. Sheffield United's Norwegian striker, Jan Egge, is battling to recover from tonsillitis, while defender David Holdsworth has missed training all week with a groin strain.

Bryan Gunn is set to make his first appearance of the season for Norwich at Wolves, who are without the suspended Steve Sedgley and Paul Simpson. Don Goodman is fit again.

MAJOR WEEKEND FOOTBALL FIXTURES AND POOLS CHECK

2.0 unless stated

TODAY

FA Carling Premiership

1 Arsenal v Leeds
2 Aston Villa v Leicester
3 Bolton v Southampton
4 Chelsea v Coventry
5 Crystal Palace v Everton
6 Liverpool v Wimbledon
7 Manchester Utd v Tottenham
8 Sheffield Wednesday v Newcastle
9 West Ham v Barnsley

Third Division

32 Barnet v Rotherham
33 Brighton v Swansea
34 Cambridge Utd v Scarborough
35 Cardiff v Leyton Orient
36 Darlington v Colchester
37 Doncaster v Shrewsbury
38 Hartlepool v Exeter
39 Hull v Mansfield
40 Lincoln City v Chester
41 Notts County v Notts County
42 Southend v Peterborough
43 Torquay v Macclesfield

Bell's Scottish League Premier Division

40 Dundee Utd v Kilmarnock
41 Hibernian v Dunfermline
42 Motherwell v Celtic
43 Rangers v Aberdeen

First Division

44 Ayr v Dundee

Second Division

20 Bournemouth v Northampton
21 Brentford v Millwall
22 Bristol City v Grimsby
23 Burnley v Watford

24 Carlisle v Southend
25 Luton v Blackpool
26 Plymouth v Bristol Rovers
27 Preston v Gillingham
28 Walsall v Chesterfield
29 Wrexham v Fulham
30 Wycombe v Wigan
31 York v Oldham

Second Division

46 Brechin v Clydebank
47 Livingston v Inverness Cal

Third Division

48 Morton v Arbroath
49 Partick v Stirling
50 Raith v St Mirren

Tennants Scottish Cup Second round

— East Stirlingshire v Edinburgh City
— Stenhousemuir v Dumbarton
— Stranraer v Fraserburgh

TOMORROW

FA Carling Premiership

Derby v Blackburn (4.0)

Nationwide Football League First Division

Crewe v Swindon (1.0)

Scottish Second Division

East Fife v Forfar (2.0)

SIDELINES

Old Boys reunion for Foxes and Villans

A by-product of Martin O'Neill's success as Leicester manager has been a toning down of the "Judas" chants which greeted Brian Little after he allegedly betrayed them for Aston Villa. But with so many of Little's old staff also becoming Villans, today's meeting offers abundant targets for any Foxes fan still nursing a grievance.

Villa's line-up is likely to contain three players Little went back for – Mark Draper, Simon Grayson and Julian Joachim – as well as Gary Charles, who was with Leicester on loan. And the home bench will be groaning with one-time Filbert Street stalwarts like assistant manager Allan Evans (who captained both clubs) and coaches Kevin MacDonald and Tony McAndrew.

Garry Parker and Graham Fenton will be back on their old stamping ground with the visitors. Others with a Villa background who careers led them to Leicester during the Nineties include Kevin Poole, Ian Ormrod, Paul Kerr, Mark Blake and Gavin Ward. Little also signed Franz Carr for both clubs, though the winger made scant impact with either.

Colin Gibson, a champion with Villa in 1981, later joined Leicester, while Steve Sims, now part of O'Neill's backroom team, made the opposite journey. Two great warrior centre-forwards, Derek Dougan and Andy Lochhead, also list both on their CVs. "The Doog" is better known but Lochhead left fonder memories, especially at Villa, whose rise from the old Third Division in 1972 he spearheaded with elegant support from ex-Leicester schemer Dave Gibson.

Ten things that Spurs' David Ginola might be missing in his home village of Gassin this weekend



- 1 A stroll through the winding streets of this Provencal village, a former winner of the "Plus Beau Village de France" award.
- 2 The views across the Golfe de St Tropez to the snow-capped peaks of the Alps. About the same distance as Tottenham are from the summit of the Premiership.
- 3 The quiet life in a village rich in history but now a calm backdrop of no significance. Sounds familiar.
- 4 Dinner at the Domaine de l'Astragale, where the restaurant "combines local produce with the delicately flavoured herbs of the region".
- 5 Black truffles, bought

- 6 A bottle of wine from one of the seven local vineyards.
- 7 A climb up La Sauvette, at 2,556ft, the tallest peak in the nearby Massif des Maures. Ideal preparation for a Christian Gross training session.
- 8 The chance for reflection in the Chapelle Notre Dame de la Compassion.
- 9 The lighthouse at Cap Camarat, which can be seen by boats at sea nearly 40 miles away.
- 10 Sunshine.

NAME OF THE GAME
No 17: O'HIGGINS

One of Chile's most famous clubs, formed in 1916, was named not after a snooker player but after one of the country's revolutionary leaders of the early 19th century. Bernardo O'Higgins was director general of Chile from 1818 until 1823, having proclaimed the country's independence from Spain.

THIS WEEK

It was exactly three years ago today that Manchester United surprised everyone by signing Andy Cole from Newcastle United. The fee was £6m plus Keith Gillespie, who was valued at £1m.

As part of the agreement, Cole did not play in the first match after his transfer – against Newcastle at St James' Park. The game ended 1-1 and was significant also for the knee injury to Mark Hughes. Cole's move seemed likely to spell the end at Old Trafford for Hughes, but his transfer to Everton was halted by the injury.

In the Coca-Cola Cup quarter-finals Liverpool beat Arsenal 1-0 – who that week paid Luton £2m for John Hartson.

THIS WEEK'S TRANSFERS

Transfers

Free transfers or undisclosed fees unless stated

Loans/trials

Pierre Laurent (forward) Leeds to Basset (F) (£200,000); Luke Weaver (goalkeeper) Leyton Orient to Sunderland (£250,000 plus appearance increments); Simon Charlton (defender) Southampton to Birmingham (£200,000); Carl Leaburn (forward) Charlton to Wimbledon (£200,000 plus appearance increments); Andy Poyton (forward) Huddersfield to Burnley; Paul

Barnes (forward) Burnley to Huddersfield

Craig Dudley (forward) Notts County to Shrewsbury; Darren Pitcher (midfielder) Crystal Palace to Leyton Orient; Pawan Wiltalla (defender) Hamburg to Sheffield Wednesday (trial); Olofin Tere Gbemason (goalkeeper) R. Fea to Sheffield Wednesday (trial); Wayne Burnett (midfielder) Huddersfield to Oxford (loan); Nicole Berti (midfielder) Internazionale (It) to Tottenham.

Contributors: Phil Shaw, Nick Harris, Paul Newman

Readers' contributions welcome. Send to: Sidelines, Sports Desk, The Independent, 1 Canale Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL

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AROUND THE RESORTS

| Resort | Comment | Area | Comp | Last | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | Forecast |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|------|------|------|-----|-------|-----|----------|
| ANDORRA | | | | | | | | |
| Soldeu/Tarter | Best snow above mid-station | 95% | 3.1 | 25 | 72 | Sum | Mid | Sum |
| AUSTRIA | | | | | | | | |
| Saiboden | Powdery snow on a hard base | 90% | 3.1 | 15 | 80 | Chang | Sum | Chang |
| BULGARIA | | | | | | | | |
| Borovets | Patchy cover only at low level | 35% | 25.5 | 0 | 35 | Sum | Sum | Sum |
| CANADA | | | | | | | | |
| Mont St Anne | Patchy snow on top | 60% | 9.1 | 25 | 65 | Sum | Sum | Sum |
| FRANCE | | | | | | | | |
| Val d'Isere | Good snow at all levels | 85% | 5.1 | 25 | 65 | Sum | Sum | Sum |
| ITALY | | | | | | | | |
| Hemlock | Sung from top to bottom | 100% | 6.1 | 45 | 65 | Sum | Sum | Sum |
| NORWAY | | | | | | | | |
| Hemlock | Fresh snow on the surface | 95% | 6.1 | 45 | 65 | Sum | Sum | Sum |
| ROMANIA | | | | | | | | |
| Spaia Braşov | Firm packed snow | 90% | 30.0 | 30 | 55 | Sum | Sum | Sum |
| SPAIN | | | | | | | | |
| Serra Nevada | Snow wet at low level | 85% | 3.1 | 30 | 45 | Sum | Sum | Sum |
| SWEDEN | | | | | | | | |
| Are | Some fresh snow on top | 65% | 5.1 | 45 | 65 | Sum | Sum | Sum |
| SWITZERLAND | | | | | | | | |
| St Moritz | Powdery snow at all levels | 100% | 5.1 | 15 | 80 | Chang | Sum | Chang |
| UNITED STATES | | | | | | | | |
| Winter Park | Light powder on firm and base | 95% | 4.1 | 30 | 75 | Sum | Sum | Sum |

Snow Reports supplied by Ski Hotline

Tottenham's taskmaster? It's all a Gross distortion

In seven weeks in charge of Tottenham Christian Gross has seen his team slide into the relegation zone while losing an average of three goals and two players per game. His chosen assistant has had a work permit rejected, the players have whispered revolt and, this week, two transfers failed.

All this and today Spurs visit Manchester United. It is enough to depress anybody, but Glenn Moore found the enigmatic Swiss manager bold and buoyant.

Ten days ago Christian Gross stood on Westminster Bridge and contemplated the future. No, he was not considering jumping off it, he was seeing in the New Year.

The annual siege of Trafalgar Square is a very English tradition which few Premiership managers would contemplate and those Spurs fans who saw their manager must have dismissed it, when they eventually surfaced the following day, as a booze-fuelled hallucination. It was not and the incident encapsulates the enigmatic nature of Tottenham's new Swiss manager.

He arrived with a reputation as a hard taskmaster, an image which grew after alleged complaints by players about having to train when injured and the sight of him barking out orders, usually it seems, "work, work harder" on the touchline.

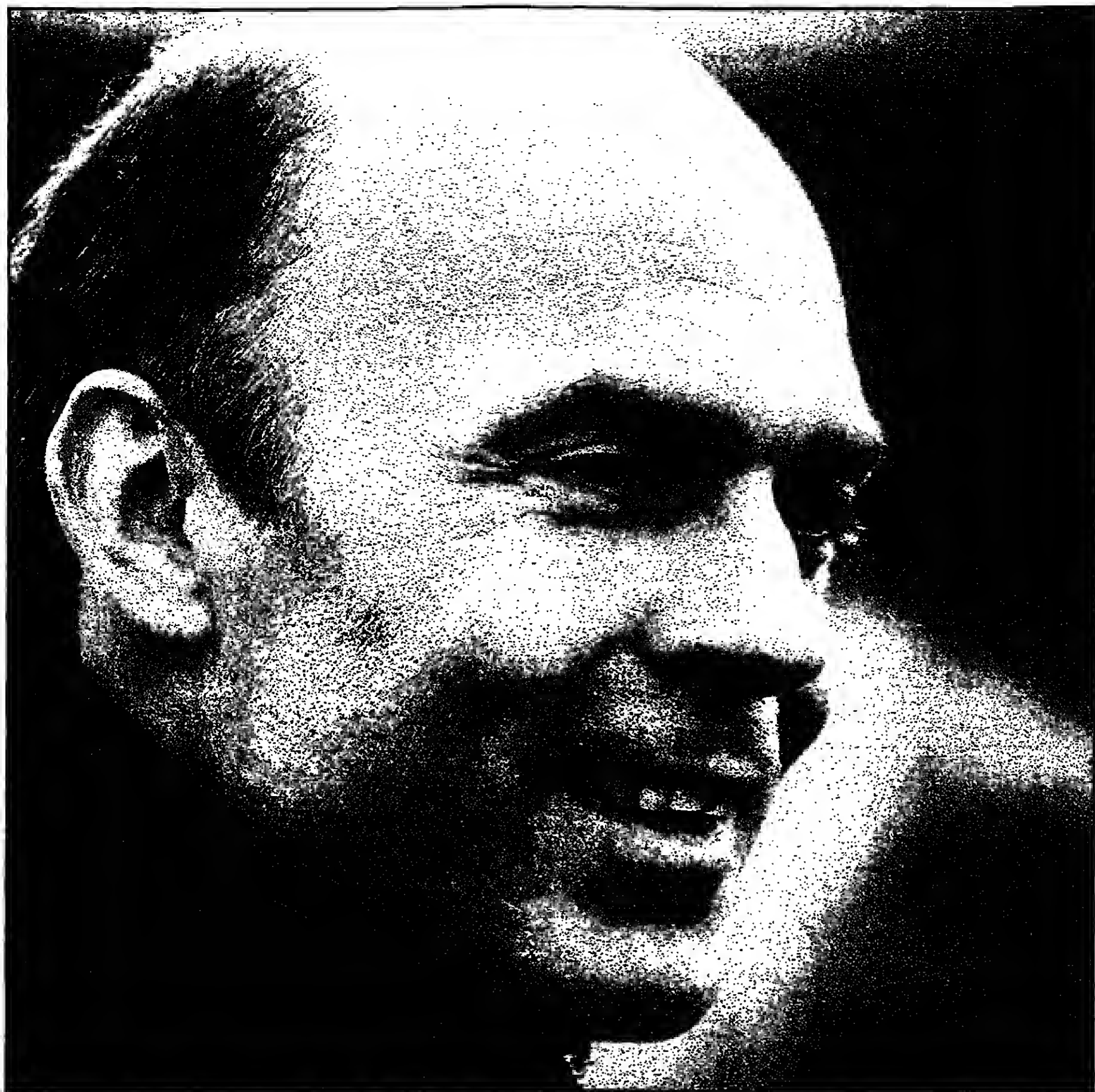
But if you spend time with him, another Gross emerges. This one wants to take the team to the circus next week - risking all manner of jokes at the expense of his defence - and raves about seeing M-People in concert. He is also, however, very committed to improving the Tottenham team and very confident of his ability to do so.

"There have been no real surprises for me," he said when we met on Thursday. "I knew when I signed the contract it would be a big challenge for me."

We are sitting in the Portakabin which Spurs use for press conferences while their Chigwell training centre is being extended. There are grilles on the windows and a spartan air about the prefab which shortly before Christmas played host to a consignment of frozen turkeys (no, not the players). This can hardly be what he expected when he came to "the world famous Tottenham".

Earlier in the day Nicola Bert was signed, but Andy Hinchcliffe did not while negotiations on Valencia's Moussa Saib have been postponed. In addition three players have been passed fit for today's trip to Old Trafford but two more ruled out. In seven matches Gross has suffered 13 injuries to 10 different players.

"There is a lack of constants, also in our performances," he said. "Over six weeks we never have the same team, it is hard daily work bringing it together with a new team all the time. We have excellent



Happy here: 'I said those things as I wanted to get things moving' Gross says of the recent headlines. 'But I will not be leaving Spurs'

Photograph: Philip Meech

individuals but we are not a team.

"We are working hard on this. Everybody needs leaders, now we have Jürgen (Klinsmann) and I also expect Les (Ferdinand) to be a leader, with his experience, class and strength, but he is often injured."

He is not alone which underlines the need for Fritz Schmid, Gross's assistant and fitness conditioner from Grasshoppers Zurich. A fortnight ago Gross suggested he would resign if Schmid failed to get a work permit but now he says that even if the appeal fails he will stay.

"I said those things as I wanted to get things moving and show Fritz

I was behind him. But I know it was Switzerland's decision not to be in the EC. Fritz is important, if I have to do a special physical session I need a specialist, but I will not be leaving Spurs."

When the furore was at its peak the Swiss FA made it clear they wanted Gross to be national coach but he said: "It is a great challenge for a Swiss coach to coach the national team but for my career, at my age (43), it is better to take a club abroad. I am happy with the situation. I am representing Switzerland. There is a lot of responsibility on my shoulders to do that."

One reason he would like to share that responsibility with Schmid is that, "I only want to work with 100 per cent fit players. I never force a player to train with injury. I expect them to tell me, 'I am not 100 per cent today' if they are injured. They have a big responsibility towards themselves and the club. I can't imagine they went to the papers but I know papers want to make their stories."

The revolt over training does not appear to be widespread and having the likes of Bert and Klinsmann, hard-working players of international repute, can only strengthen Gross's position. Not that he claims to be the

hard man his reputation suggests. He certainly seems astonished when I tell him Brian Clough was notorious for inspiring his players through fear.

"I want to convince players my way is successful, not scare them. It takes time to learn about one other. There is an undercurrent of frustration, however, when he adds: "They have a special profession and I am not sure every player realises this. It is an excellent profession. A lot of players can't compare themselves with life outside soccer."

Gross, 43, was a respectable player himself in Switzerland and the Bundesliga where he played for

Bochum. He was described by one German observer as a midfielder with good vision, but overweight which makes his emphasis on fitness ironic. As a coach he has a good reputation in Germany where the reaction to his appointment at White Hart Lane was not "Christian Who?" but "good choice".

He almost played at White Hart Lane as a teenager but was injured when they met in the 1973-74 Uefa Cup. Always keen on coaching he began at Will, a Swiss Third Division club, before progressing to Grasshopper Zurich where he won two championships and the Swiss Cup. Gross

cites Helmut Johansson, a Bundesliga title-winner with Eintracht Brunswick in 1967, and later his coach at Bochum, as a key influence along with the Austrian Ernst Happel, who coached the Netherlands, and the Italians Giovanni Trapattoni, Arrigo Sacchi and Fabio Capello.

These last names would suggest a belief in the pressing game, not quite the glory, glory game of Tottenham tradition but potentially attractive, as the Milan of Gullit and company demonstrated.

"I want my teams to play with pressure and I want them to control the game. I hate it when we have to react but there are a lot of strong teams here. The Premiership is very equal. The pace and power of the English game has impressed me. From the kick-off there is a 100 per cent tempo. Sometimes it is too fast, you must be able to control the ball, but there is always a lot of pressure on the pitch. The crowd demands it, I like the passion here but they do not like the ball being passed back."

"My ideal team is Manchester. They are outstanding, one of the best in Europe, maybe the world. They are my European Cup favourites and should have won last year."

He means, of course, Manchester United. It has become increasingly apparent, when talking to foreign players and managers, that they call Alex Ferguson's side "Manchester". Outside Britain, Manchester City no longer appear to have a profile.

Gross has not been to Old Trafford but he is undaunted. "It is a good challenge for us. It is important we are brave and show a big heart. They will pressure us and we will have to find out the best way to counter them. We have to be intelligent, realistic and efficient. We will not have many occasions to score but I am sure we will have some. We have to take them."

Gross is living in a hotel but expects to move into a flat or house near Chigwell by the end of the month. His Swiss girlfriend accompanied him to Westminster Bridge but remains in Switzerland with no prospect of a work permit.

The New Year's Eve trip ("it was as cold as Switzerland - and I missed the fireworks") is one of only two visits he has made to central London, the other was for visa purposes. A fan of Peter Gabriel, Elton John and M-People among others, Gross was a keen concert-goer in Switzerland and is looking forward to having more time to enjoy the capital's entertainment while accepting he will not be skiing this season. The next London date is to see the Cirque du Soleil Alegria, "an old, famous circus" at the Albert Hall with the team.

David Pleat may be aboard by then, the former Tottenham manager begins work as director of football on 14 January with some wondering whether he is really the manager-in-waiting. "I am open to him," said Gross. "I am positive, we had a meeting and I felt he loves soccer. But it is important the powers are strictly divided. He will not be here, he will be at White Hart Lane."

Wimbledon's failure to surprise is the big surprise

There may have been no real surprises in the third round of the FA Cup (Stevenage aside, that is) or in the midweek Coca-Cola Cup semi-finals, but never let it be said that football as a whole has lost its capacity to surprise. OK, so you did not need to be a clairvoyant to predict that Manchester United might now be peering down at Barnsley from their lofty peak astride the Premiership, but elsewhere this season has sprung enough surprises to catch even the most convincing of bookies on the hop.

Teddy Sheringham's pre-season transfer to Manchester United set the trend (the surprise was that United got him for £3.5m when Spurs had put a £6m price tag round his neck - a steal that evoked memories of Ferguson's astute capture of Eric Cantona from Leeds). Sheringham's mid-season report reads well, but it is the form of his strike partner that has made everyone eat humble pie. Once the butt of every football joke going, Cole has remembered how to score goals again and an England place is suddenly on the cards.

Arsenal's inconsistency has been a surprise; ditto Blackburn's consistency; it's amazing what wonders a new

manager and a recuperated, rejuvenated strike force can bring, although try telling that to Tottenham fans.

Newcastle, meanwhile, do not even have a strike force, let alone one that is recuperated or rejuvenated. Their rousing of the mighty Barcelona was certainly a surprise, as have been their sluggish performances since. And while Alan Shearer may have surprised no one by healing so fast (is there anything this man does not do well?), his return to action cannot come quickly enough.

The form of Derby and Leicester has surprised those who wrote them off; Leicester went one-up against Atletico Madrid, for heaven's sake. Southampton, too, have so far upset the odds, thanks mainly to the form of 20-year-old Kevin Davies, who, for me, has been the surprise package of the season to date.

Coventry, as usual, are full of surprises; you never really know quite what to expect from the Sky Blues, but it is certainly not victories over Man United and Liverpool. And in Darren Huckerby they have the footballing equivalent of a conjurer: no one really knows what he's going to pull out of his bag of tricks next.

Wimbledon always spring a



OLIVIA BLAIR

ON THIS SEASON'S TALES OF THE UNEXPECTED

surprise; this season it's that they appear to have lost their ability to spring a surprise. Sheffield Wednesday's early demise was unexpected considering how well they started last season and the fact they had strengthened their squad with the likes of Paolo Di Canio and Peter Rudi after just missing out on a European place.

That Everton and Spurs are suffering can be surprising no one - both teams were heading for a fall - but the same cannot be said about the form of Nick Barnby (one wasted season is forgivable, two is not), the arrivals at White

Hart Lane of Christian Gross and Jürgen Klinsmann and the fact that Darren Anderton actually played some football before getting injured again.

No one would have prophesied Villa would lose their first four games, nor that £7m Stan Collymore was going to forget where the goal was after all, he knows Villa Park well enough. And who would have thought that Palace would be so unsalable away from home and so available at Selhurst Park, or that Attilio Lombardo would be playing his football in SE25 this season?

No prizes for guessing the biggest surprise outside the Premiership. Kevin Keegan's return to football was astonishing; that he should choose to return at Fulham was flabbergasting. But despite Keegan's much-heralded five-year plan the Cottagers have hardly set the Second Division alight. Watford have, however, inspired by the game's most put-upon strike force (Jason Lee and the evergreen "Rocket" Rooney Rosenthal) and its most prolific left-back (Peter Kennedy), they have opened up an almost uncatchable lead at the top. It will be a surprise if they are caught.

In the First Division newly promoted Stockport have

been the surprise packet, although you also could say that of their local rivals Manchester City - it's surprising just how low a side can sink. In the Third Division, meanwhile, that accolade should go to 38-year-old Jimmy Quinn, scorer of 20 goals for high-flying Peterborough. Quinn has been the most significant of all Barry Fry's signings - and there have been a few.

The biggest surprise north of the border came last Friday when Celtic beat Rangers for the first time in a New Year game since 1988, although Hearts' early pace-setting also caused a stir.

Marco Negri has been a turn-up for the books, too, the taciturn Italian having scored 33 goals so far for Rangers this season. His manager, Walter Smith, is not renowned for his successful foreign shopping trips (Oleg Salenko, Basile Boli and Erik Bo Anderson spring to mind).

England astounded rather than surprised Italy by holding out in Rome to secure their place in the World Cup finals. But those who remain sceptical about their World Cup chances will be hoping that they will remember France '98 for providing the biggest surprise of the season. Ne c'est pas?

Georgian genius with an empathy for bitter rivalry

People often ask why I think Gio has remained a Blue. Their voices betray both disbelief, which I understand but do not share, and covetousness, which I relish for its rarity value in relation to my team. One can only speculate as to why, but the old-fashioned promise-keeping which enabled City to sign him explains a lot.

The Tbilisi president, Merab Jordania, had met Francis Lee in a hotel to discuss the transfer. Representatives of some of Europe's biggest clubs were lurking in the lobby, wishing in vain for that meeting. Jordania, virtually a hostage in the suite, gave his word that Kinkladze would sign for - wait for it - £2m. He kept his word. Georgian honour, Jordania confirmed, is a serious matter.

City fans were sceptical about the newcomer after Ingebrigtsen, Groenendijk and other Silenzi-esque imports had failed to produce much footballing arousal. Did they dare believe that multiple orgasm was round the corner? No.

It was stressed that he was Georgian, not Russian. Dining with fellow newcomer, Kit Symons, in the hotel that was then their home Symons heard some businessmen speaking what he thought was Gio's mother tongue.

"Fucking Russian," Kinkladze hissed, leaving the defender perfectly clued up. In other words, try calling Gordon Strachan an Englishman.

His left-footed tours of opposition halves stunned the support. This style began to draw straight-faced comparisons to Maradona. Few pundits were prepared to accept this but, then again, Gio didn't play for United, did he? He was predictably nicknamed Kinky, and T-shirts bearing the legend "Kinky 69" appeared.

FAN'S EYE VIEW
NO 239
GEORGI KINKLADZE
BY
MARC STARR

That is, until the Kink found a dictionary.

Then there was utter disgust that his run and finish against Southampton only came second in Goal of the Season to Yobo's volley against Liverpool. How many volleys are scored compared with goals of that standard?

No one knew what to believe about the enigma. There was an apparently dubious, but true, story about Robison Kinkladze returning

from war to urge his son to play football and quit a career with the Georgian National Dance company which Khatuna Kinkladze preferred her son to pursue. The staggering strength and balance required for dancing had not harmed Gio as a player, but the Barmy Blue Army definitely owes Robison a pint.

Not half. It is argued that he would be in better company at Newcastle or Liverpool. I admit expecting him to eventually take the playmaker role at one of those clubs. Even Maradona, Gio's hero, urging him to find a "better" club did not succeed. Unhappy spells at Saarbrücken in Austria and Boca Juniors suggested that Georgi preferred Manchester to Buenos Aires, which he was adored for.

Gio perhaps feels the frustrations of fans who, when abroad, have to explain their team is nothing to do with Bobby Charlton. After years of "I'm not Russian, I'm Georgian!", he must sympathise, even if one situation is a bitter rivalry stretching back over many decades and the other led to a war of independence.

And as we know you won't yet use it to desert Manchester, have another Ferrari on us, KingKladze.

Spurs
... can score five
... at Stamford
... what will
... United do
... Tottenham Hotspur
... and Trafford?
... looks at that
... and other leading
... fixtures this
... while below,
... assesses the
... game match by

Arsenal v
... Leading
... Last season

Aston Villa v
... Leading
... Last season

Bolton v Sou
... Leading
... Last season

Chelsea v
... Leading
... Last season

Crystal Palace
... Leading
... Last season

If they can score five goals at Stamford Bridge what will Manchester United do to Tottenham Hotspur at Old Trafford?
Guy Hodgson looks at that game and other leading Premiership fixtures this weekend while below, Rob McLean assesses the programme match by match.

If you wanted to mark the decline in Tottenham Hotspur, their wheeling and dealing this week would do as well as any telling. Thirty years ago tomorrow Spurs broke the British transfer record when they paid Southampton £125,000 for Martin Chivers. Now a really big money move is more likely to break the club.

Like the team, there was a frenzy of activity but at the end there was little to show for it. Just a loan signing, the Italian Nicola Bertl, which for a club which likes to think of itself as among the élite was a minimal response to the predicament of being second bottom of the Premiership.

They will sample the big time today but only as well-off tourists in a National Trust

property. Not so long ago Manchester United versus Tottenham was a meeting of giants but if the visitors win at Old Trafford the reaction will be akin to a Cup upset.

Maybe if United had not been caught against Coventry a fortnight ago, Tottenham might have found the champions in an over-confident and over-indulgent mood but the players' cars are still ringing from Alex Ferguson's eruption at Highfield Road.

"We like to make things difficult for ourselves," the United manager says repeatedly, although, at five points clear at the top of the Premiership, there are degrees of difficulty. "We need to make sure there are no more slip-ups." The home side have scored 30 times in 10 home

League matches while Tottenham have conceded 22 on their travels so the only thing likely to be on the slide is Spurs.

While Tottenham go north in trepidation, George Graham will travel in the opposite direction eager to meet his old club, Arsenal. He was sacked in 1995 because of his role in the "transfer hungs" affair and it is only now that he feels he can return with a Leeds side that can compete as equals.

"I'm always happy to go to Highbury and I'm looking forward to it again this time, perhaps more than ever," Graham said. "I'm comfortable about it because of the progress we have made in the last year or so."

"The last two times I've been back it wasn't really my own team. We were taken

apart on the first occasion and on the second, a few months later in the FA Cup, we won with a very solid performance but really we were way behind Arsenal last season."

Not that Leeds have a promising record. They have won just once in the League in their last nine visits and arrive at Arsenal just as Ian Wright has rediscovered what the pieces of white metal at each end of the pitch are for. He scored against West Ham in the Coca-Cola Cup in midweek, only his second goal in three months.

Third-placed Chelsea have had a slump recently, too, and entertain Coventry having been dismembered by Manchester United last Sunday. That 5-3 rout followed a defeat at Southampton which makes the

present a particularly inopportune time for a flu virus to attack the squad.

Usually only Ruddy Gullit knows what the team is going to be but today even the Chelsea manager might be perplexed as at least five players have been laid low. Coventry, meanwhile, arrive at Stamford Bridge in rude health after successive wins over United and Liverpool.

Everton have a new striker, the French international Mickael Madar, to look forward to. Whether he will get on against Crystal Palace at Selhurst Park is debatable but at least the manager, Howard Kendall, has options up front which is something he has been bereft of this season.

Liverpool, whose Steve

McManaman was named the player of the month for December yesterday, encounter another of their ghosts of lapses past in Wimbledon. The Dons have lost on one of their last seven visits but arrive with the albatross of one win in their last seven matches. As ever at Anfield the outcome is wholly unpredictable.

John Prescott, the deputy Prime Minister, will officially open Bolton's Reebok Stadium today and then Colin Todd hopes his defence will lock out Southampton. Wanderers have been conceding goals at the rate of two a game since their last win, against Newcastle on 1 December, an act of generosity which has seen them sink to just above the relegation places.

Newcastle, too, are beginning to look anxiously in that direction. Their shortcomings in front of goal have left them with one win in nine games and they are just six points away from the bottom three. Sheffield Wednesday, another team in a worrying run, will draw level if they beat them at Hillsborough today.

Barnsley, the bottom club, last won at West Ham in September 1919 and as they have scored a mere eight times away from home the chances of them ending the sequence are not favourable.

Blackburn, with 13, have been less than prolific either but only Wimbledon have conceded fewer on their travels so a tight match can be anticipated at Derby, who are uneaten at home, tomorrow.

Arsenal v Leeds

Bergkamp 12 Leading scorer Wallace 10

Last season: 3-0

Arsenal will be hoping that their midweek Coca-Cola Cup success at West Ham, will mean an improvement in their League form. Ian Wright, who returned from suspension to make a scoring return at Upton Park, will lead the attack against a Leeds side managed by former Highbury manager George Graham. But England midfielder David Platt is still out with a groin injury and although full-back Lee Dixon returns to the squad after recovering from a similar problem, Wenger is likely to remain loyal to fellow Frenchman Gilles Grimandi. Graham, who is unbeaten in his last three games against Arsenal, still sees Wright as the major threat. "Some people have criticised Ian recently, but he is still one of the game's lethal finishers," Graham said.

Leeds' captain David Hopkin and Norwegian international midfielder Alf Inge Haaland may have to contend with a place on the bench again as both were substitutes in last week's FA Cup tie at home to Oxford. Defender David Robertson, completes a two-match ban.

Aston Villa v Leicester
 Yorke, Taylor 6 Leading scorer
 Last season: 1-3 Marshall 8

Leicester manager Martin O'Neill is optimistic that Ian Marshall and Steve Walsh will be fit. Striker Marshall should be given the all-clear from a groin injury while Walsh expects to return from a hamstring strain. If Marshall is ruled out, Tony Cottee, the former West Ham and Everton striker, could come into the side after scoring as substitute in the FA Cup victory over Northampton last Saturday. O'Neill will be looking for his striker Emile Heskey to rediscover his goalscoring touch. Heskey, who celebrates his 20th birthday tomorrow and is trying to win a place in Glenn Hoddle's World Cup squad this year, has scored only once in the last 15 matches for the Foxes.

Riccardo Scimeca returns for Villa with England defender Gareth Southgate suffering with a twisted ankle. Julian Joachim, stands by to play against his former club, replacing Stan Collymore, who he came on for in the 2-2 FA Cup third round draw at Portsmouth last Saturday.

Bolton v Southampton

Bob Taylor, the former Leeds striker on loan with Bolton from West Brom, may be given his chance to boost Colin Todd's attack at the Reebok Stadium. Taylor will come into the team if Dean Holdsworth, who has been out for a month with a knee and shin injury, does not recover in time. Bolton's goalkeeper Keith Rnning is now fully fit again after missing five matches with a groin injury and looks set to take over from Gavin Ward. Todd is still waiting to see if another former Leeds player, Mike Whitlow, will be fit. The defender was taken off on a stretcher against Barnsley with a knee injury but X-rays revealed no major damage, although his chances of being fit in time are slim.

Southampton's Neil Moss is on standby to replace Wales international keeper Paul Jones, who is doubtful with a groin injury. Carlton Palmer, the club's signing from Leeds, will continue in defence if Norwegian Claus Lundekvam fails to recover from a calf injury.

Chelsea v Coventry

Valin H Leading scorer Dublin 10

Last season: 2-0

Ruud Gullit will hold a Stamford Bridge roll-call today before deciding who is fit to take on Coventry. The Chelsea camp have been hit by a flu bug which meant Romanian Dan Petrescu and Gianluca Vialli were forced out of Wednesday's Coca-Cola Cup trip to Ipswich. Petrescu was again told to stay at home yesterday and with Roberto Di Matteo and youngster Nick Critchenden - and Gullit himself - still struggling, along with Gianfranco Zola and Frank Leboeuf, the team is uncertain. Frank Sinclair is ruled out through suspension while Andy Myers damaged a hamstring on Wednesday and is also out of contention.

Coventry manager Gordon Strachan will leave it until the last moment to decide whether Romanian World Cup striker Viorel Moldovan, who he signed for £2.5m from Swiss club Grasshoppers, is ready to make his Premiership debut. Strachan will be without the suspended Marcus Hall and George Boateng while John Salako could return after three months out with a hamstring injury. Roland Nilsson is back after flu.

Crystal Palace v Everton
Shipperley 6 Leading scorer Speed 68

Crystal Palace's injury crisis could mean an immediate debut for 19-year-old striker Marcus Bent following his transfer from Brentford. Palace's attempt to sign Tommy Johnson on loan from Celtic has run into trouble because of a failure to reach agreement over the length of the deal. Paul Warhurst is likely to be out for six weeks because of a stress fracture and Attilio Lombardo and Michele Padovano, who have been training with Palace this week after injuries, are unlikely to feature today. Neil Shipperley (groin) is also likely to miss out, but Bruce Dyer (ankle) is expected to play. Jamie Smith is also likely to play despite an ankle problem. Everton will have their new French international striker Mickael Madar in the side, with Danny Cadamarteri likely to drop out. Slaven Bilic returns after a five-match ban, while Gary Speed is back after an ankle injury and a week of transfer speculation. Craig Short also returns after injury. Terry Phelan, the likely replacement for the injured Andy Hinchcliffe, is back after a knee operation.

History turning against Everton and Tottenham

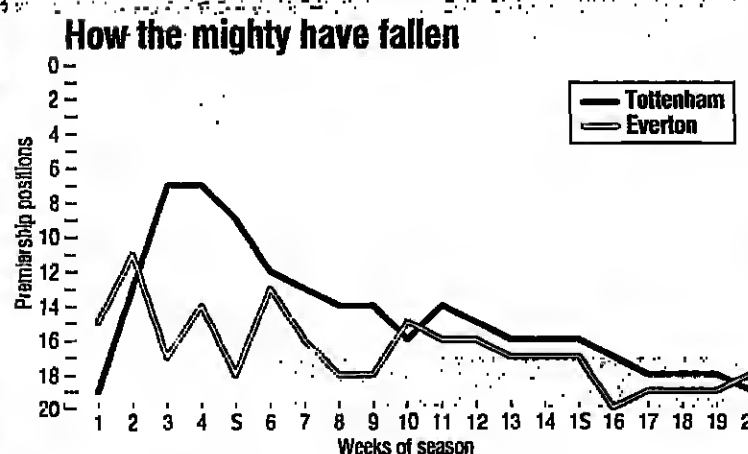
The threat of relegation hanging over two of the top flight's longest-serving members grows greater as the Premiership season progresses. Everton last suffered relegation 47 years ago, while Tottenham have been in the country's top division for 20 years.

Indeed Everton have played in the Premiership or the old First Division for more seasons (94) than any other club. Founder members of the Football League in 1888, they have spent only four seasons outside the top flight, 1930-31 and 1951-54. Tottenham, meanwhile, have one of the best post-war records. They have been outside the top division for only five seasons: four immediately after the war and one when they dropped into the old Second Division 20 years ago. As they attempt to escape from the relegation zone, Everton are turning to youth while Tottenham are opting for experience.

Back in August Everton were fielding one of the Premiership's oldest sides, with an average age of over 28. By last weekend the average had dropped to 23, with the teenagers Danny Cadamarteri, Michael Ball and Richard Dunne replacing the likes of Dave Watson, Terry Phelan and Slaven Bilic, while goalkeeper Thomas Myrnes is 15 years Neville Southall's junior.

At the beginning of the season only Leeds had a younger team than Tottenham. However, the recent introduction of Jurgen Klinsmann has helped to push up the average age of the Spurs team from 26 to nearly 28.

**In their fight against relegation
Everton have put their faith
in youngsters like
Danny Cadamarteri**



FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: HOW THEY STAND

| | | Home | | | | | | | | | | Away | | | | | | | | | | Form (most recent on right) | Upcoming matches |
|----|-------------|------|-----|-----|---|---|---|----|----|---|---|------|----|----|--------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--------------------------------|------------------|
| | | Pl | Pos | GD | W | D | L | F | A | W | D | L | F | A | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Man Utd | 21 | 46 | +33 | 9 | 1 | 0 | 30 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 19 | 2 | WWWWL | 19 Jan Southampton (A), 21 Feb Everton (H), 7 Feb Tottenham (H), 14 Feb Bolton (A) | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Blackburn | 21 | 41 | -17 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 25 | 12 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 13 | 9 | WWWDD | 17 Jan Aston Villa (H), 31 Jan Liverpool (A), 7 Feb Tottenham (H), 14 Feb Leeds (A) | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Chelsea | 21 | 39 | +25 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 29 | 14 | WDWDL | 18 Jan Everton (A), 21 Jan Barnsley (A), 8 Feb Bolton (A), 14 Feb Tottenham (H) | | | | | | | |
| 4 | Liverpool | 20 | 37 | +17 | 7 | 0 | 5 | 23 | 10 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 13 | 9 | LWWWWW | 17 Jan Leicester (A), 20 Jan Newcastle (A), 31 Jan Blackburn (H), 7 Feb Southampton (H) | | | | | | | |
| 5 | Leeds | 21 | 35 | +7 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 16 | 12 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 11 | 11 | DDWLD | 17 Jan Everton (A), 21 Jan Bolton (A), 7 Feb Arsenal (A), 14 Feb Blackburn (A) | | | | | | | |
| 6 | Arsenal | 20 | 34 | +12 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 21 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 14 | 15 | LLWLWD | 17 Jan Coventry (A), 31 Jan Southampton (H), 8 Feb Bolton (A), 14 Feb Bristol City (A) | | | | | | | |
| 7 | Derby | 21 | 32 | +6 | 7 | 3 | 0 | 20 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 14 | 23 | DDDWL | 17 Jan Blackburn (A), 21 Jan Southampton (H), 8 Feb Aston Villa (A), 14 Feb Everton (H) | | | | | | | |
| 8 | West Ham | 21 | 31 | -4 | 8 | 0 | 1 | 18 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 10 | 26 | LWLWW | 17 Jan Tottenham (A), 31 Jan Everton (A), 7 Feb Newcastle (A), 14 Feb Man Utd (H) | | | | | | | |
| 9 | Leicester | 21 | 28 | +4 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 13 | 11 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 12 | 10 | DLILL | 17 Jan Everton (A), 21 Jan Man Utd (H), 7 Feb Leeds (A), 14 Feb Tottenham (H) | | | | | | | |
| 10 | Aston Villa | 21 | 26 | -2 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 16 | 14 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 9 | 13 | WLWDW | 17 Jan Bolton (A), 14 Feb Barnsley (H), 7 Feb Derby (A), 20 Jan Liverpool (A) | | | | | | | |
| 11 | Newcastle | 20 | 26 | -4 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 13 | 13 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 12 | DDLLL | 17 Jan Bolton (A), 20 Jan Liverpool (A), 8 Feb Bolton (A), 7 Feb West Ham (H) | | | | | | | |
| 12 | Wimbledon | 20 | 24 | -3 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 12 | 16 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 9 | 8 | LWDDL | 7 Jan Derby (H), 31 Jan Sheffield Wed (A), 9 Feb Palace (A), 14 Feb Newcastle (H) | | | | | | | |
| 13 | Southampton | 21 | 24 | -5 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 18 | 14 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 7 | 16 | LWDDW | 17 Jan Man Utd (H), 21 Jan Arsenal (A), 7 Feb Blackburn (A), 14 Feb Tottenham (H) | | | | | | | |
| 14 | Coventry | 21 | 23 | -8 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 17 | 12 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 16 | LLWLW | 17 Jan Arsenal (H), 31 Jan Bolton (A), 7 Feb Sheffield Wed (H), 14 Feb Southampton (A) | | | | | | | |
| 15 | Cl Palace | 21 | 23 | -8 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 15 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 14 | 13 | DLDDD | 17 Jan Barnsley (A), 31 Jan Coventry (A), 9 Feb Wimbledon (A), 14 Feb Bolton (A) | | | | | | | |
| 16 | Sheff Wed | 21 | 23 | -12 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 16 | 17 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 11 | 27 | WLDDD | 17 Jan Leeds (A), 31 Jan Wimbledon (H), 7 Feb Coventry (A), 14 Feb Liverpool (H) | | | | | | | |
| 17 | Bolton | 21 | 21 | -14 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 10 | 26 | LDLIL | 17 Jan Newcastle (A), 20 Jan Bolton (H), 7 Feb Man Utd (A), 14 Feb Arsenal (H) | | | | | | | |
| 18 | Everton | 21 | 20 | -11 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 14 | 15 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 16 | DDWLW | 18 Jan Chelsea (H), 31 Jan West Ham (A), 7 Feb Barnsley (A), 14 Feb Everton (H) | | | | | | | |
| 19 | Tottenham | 21 | 20 | -18 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 12 | 15 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 7 | 22 | LLWLD | 17 Jan West Ham (A), 21 Jan Derby (A), 7 Feb Bolton (A), 14 Feb Leicester (H) | | | | | | | |
| 20 | Barnsley | 21 | 18 | -32 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 11 | 20 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 8 | 31 | LDLDW | 17 Jan Crystal Palace (H), 31 Jan Chelsea (A), 7 Feb Everton (H), 14 Feb Aston Villa (A) | | | | | | | |

| Player | Games | Red | Yellow | Pts | Ans |
|----------------|-------|-----|--------|-----|------|
| 1 G Poff | 13 | 7 | 5 | 89 | 6.85 |
| 2 M Reed | 12 | 5 | 4 | 85 | 6.91 |
| 3 J Wilcox | 11 | 3 | 6 | 55 | 5.51 |
| 4 G Barber | 11 | 3 | 4 | 42 | 5.36 |
| 5 P Durkin | 13 | 3 | 4 | 64 | 4.92 |
| 6 J Wimer | 12 | 4 | 4 | 51 | 4.25 |
| 7 U Pernie | 12 | 1 | 4 | 50 | 4.57 |
| 8 S Dunn | 9 | 1 | 3 | 37 | 4.71 |
| 9 P Jones | 10 | 2 | 3 | 41 | 4.30 |
| 10 M Riley | 11 | 2 | 3 | 44 | 4.00 |
| 11 P Alcock | 11 | 0 | 3 | 44 | 4.00 |
| 12 A Wille | 12 | 2 | 3 | 47 | 3.92 |
| 13 G Ashfield | 12 | 2 | 3 | 43 | 3.91 |
| 14 D Ellery | 12 | 1 | 4 | 46 | 3.83 |
| 15 K Bunge | 10 | 1 | 3 | 35 | 3.50 |
| 16 M Bodenham | 10 | 0 | 3 | 33 | 3.30 |
| 17 N Barry | 11 | 1 | 3 | 36 | 3.27 |
| 18 D Gallagher | 12 | 2 | 2 | 37 | 3.02 |
| 19 S Lodge | 11 | 0 | 2 | 22 | 2.20 |

Friendship matches: include women's games. Red cards:

| | Pt | Red | Yellow | Pt | Ave |
|----------------------|----|-----|--------|----|------|
| 1 Coventry..... | 21 | 4 | 45 | 65 | 3.10 |
| 2 Leeds..... | 21 | 3 | 48 | 61 | 2.90 |
| 3 Bolton..... | 21 | 4 | 40 | 63 | 2.88 |
| 4 Everton..... | 21 | 0 | 45 | 60 | 2.86 |
| 5 Chelsea..... | 21 | 3 | 38 | 53 | 2.52 |
| 6 Sheffield Wed..... | 21 | 3 | 36 | 51 | 2.43 |
| 7 Arsenal..... | 21 | 1 | 45 | 50 | 2.38 |
| 8 Derby..... | 22 | 1 | 47 | 52 | 2.36 |
| 9 Blackburn..... | 21 | 3 | 34 | 49 | 2.33 |
| 10 Newcastle..... | 20 | 2 | 36 | 46 | 2.30 |
| 11 C Palace..... | 22 | 4 | 40 | 50 | 2.27 |
| 12 West Ham..... | 22 | 1 | 37 | 51 | 2.31 |
| 13 Liverpool..... | 20 | 2 | 29 | 34 | 1.70 |
| 14 Man Utd..... | 0 | 0 | 35 | 35 | 1.67 |
| 15 Barnsley..... | 21 | 0 | 32 | 32 | 1.52 |
| 16 Southampton..... | 21 | 0 | 32 | 32 | 1.52 |
| 17 Wimbledon..... | 22 | 1 | 28 | 33 | 1.50 |
| 18 Leicester..... | 21 | 1 | 26 | 31 | 1.48 |
| 19 Tottenham..... | 21 | 1 | 26 | 31 | 1.48 |
| 20 A Villa..... | 21 | 1 | 24 | 29 | 1.38 |

†Pragrams to matches includes abandoned games. Red cards

| | Lyg | CC | FA | Euro | Tot |
|---|--------------------------|----|----|------|-----|
| 1 | Cole (Man Utd)11 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 18 |
| 2 | Hartson (West Ham) 11 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 18 |
| 3 | Vialli (Chelsea)6 | 0 | 2 | 8 | 14 |
| 4 | Sutton (Blackburn) 12 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 13 |
| | Gallacher (Blackburn) 10 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 13 |
| 5 | Balzano (Derby)11 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 12 |
| | Bergkamp (Arsenal) 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 12 |
| | Fowler (Liverpool) 9 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 12 |
| 6 | Wright (Arsenal)10 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 11 |
| | Davies (Soton)8 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 11 |
| | Sherringham (Man Utd) 8 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 11 |
| | Owen (Liverpool) .6 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 11 |
| 7 | Dublin (Coventry) .8 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 10 |
| | Wallace (Leeds)8 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 10 |
| | Wanchope (Derby) .6 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 10 |

Liverpool v Wimbledon
 Fowler 12 Leading scorer
 Last season: 1-1 Carr 6

After the Coca-Cola Cup victory at Newcastle, Liverpool are likely to be unchanged, it means that the Norwegians Bjørn Tore Kvaerne and Stig Bjørnøbye are left out, while Brad Friedel will spend his fifth game on the bench following David James' excellent form – perhaps inspired by the American's arrival. Liverpool will be looking to lift the jinx – which started with the 1988 FA Cup final defeat – that Wimbledon have over them. Wimbledon have lost just once in their last seven games at Anfield. By beating the Merseysiders at the end of last season, Wimbledon finally ended the title hopes of Roy Evans' team.

With Efan Ekoku, Jon Goodman and Jason Euell sidelined by injury and Marcus Gayle nursing a hamstring injury, Wimbledon are set to give a debut to Carl Leaburn, their new £300,000 signing from Charlton. Wimbledon will also be without Ben Thatcher, their England Under-21 international defender, who will be missing for a month because of an ankle injury.

Man Utd v Tottenham
 Cole 18 Leading scorer Ginola 7
 Last season: 2-0

Ole Gunnar Solskjær has shrugged off a chest cold to take his place in the Manchester United squad. However, the Norwegian will have to settle for a place among the substitutes if Alex Ferguson sticks with the side which humiliated Chelsea last Sunday. United will be without Phil Neville, who will be serving the second game of a two-match ban. The champions and Premiership leaders have no injury worries apart from the longer-term absentees Jordi Cruyff, David May and Roy Keane.

Tottenham's new signing from Internazionale, Nicola Berni, will make his debut at Old Trafford, but goalkeeper Ian Walker and David Gilnour have both been ruled out with injuries sustained in the 3-1 FA Cup win against Fulham on Monday. Walker's absence gives the Norwegian Under-21 goalkeeper Espen Baardens his second senior start while Gilnori's place goes to winger Roly Fox, who has shaken off a hamstring problem. Jürgen Klinsmann will again play a lone-role up front.

Sheff Wed v Newcastle
 Di Canio 9 Leading scorer Barnes, Asprilla 6
 Last season: 1-1

Sheffield Wednesday striker Guy Whittingham faces a late fitness test after picking up a knock in a midweek reserve game although, if fit, he is unlikely to start. His manager Ron Atkinson played three up front - Benito Carbone, Paolo Di Canio and Andy Booth - in last week's FA Cup third-round draw at Watford and with Carbone inspirational could keep faith with the same formation.

Faustino Aspinla, Newcastle's Colombian striker, is almost certainly out because of a thigh injury suffered in the FA Cup victory over Everton last Sunday. The Colombian failed to get on the team coach as they set off for their overnight base in Sheffield yesterday, but manager Kenny Dalglish refused to rule out the former Parma player. Defender Warren Barton is available once again after recovering from a leg injury while winger Keith Gillespie and the England defender Stuart Pearce, who both missed the midweek Coca-Cola Cup defeat by Liverpool, are also travelling.

West Ham v Barnsley
 Harrison 18 Leading scorer Redfern 2
 Last season: No corresponding fixture

West Ham will be without striker Paul Konson after he limped out of the midweek Coca-Cola Cup defeat by Arsenal with a groin strain. Samassi Abou is likely to partner John Hartson up front, while main defenders Ian Bishop and John Moncur are both fit again and available for selection. Steve Lomas will miss out as he serves the last game of a three-match ban, while Steve Potts could stand down. Tim Breaker is still ruled out with an ankle injury, but fellow defender Ian Pearce has recovered from a hamstring injury which forced him to be substituted against Arsenal. Youngster Lee Hodges, yet to play for West Ham, has been recalled from his loan spell at Plymouth and is likely to figure on the bench.

Barnsley are without defenders Arjan de Zeeuw and Adie Moses as they start two-match suspensions after picking up five bookings apiece. Manager Danny Wilson will choose between Sweden Peter Markstedt, Slovenian international Ales Krznar and Matty Appleby for the centre-back positions.

Derby v Blackburn
 Leading scorer Gallacher, Sutton B
 Last season: 0-0

Derby manager Jim Smith has been forced to draft two young players into his squad for tomorrow's match at Pride Park after wing-back Robert Kozluk was yesterday ruled out. Kozluk has a groin strain to compound problems for Smith, who was already without three midfielders due to suspension, Stefano Eranio, Darryl Powell and Lee Carseley are all serving two-match bans, so Smith has included versatile 21-year-old Craig Smith and 18-year-old Marc Bridge-Wilkinson in his 17-man squad. But the good news for Smith is that Danish defender Jacob Laursen and striker Dean Sturridge are both available after injury.

Lars Bohinen is Blackburn's only doubt after bruising his ribs during last week's FA Cup tie against Wigan and will have a late fitness test. The striking partnership of Chris Sutton and Kevin Gallacher are expected to return after recovering from thigh and back injuries respectively. Martin Dahlin will also be in the squad after training since Wednesday and Gary Croft returns after missing the win over Wigan.

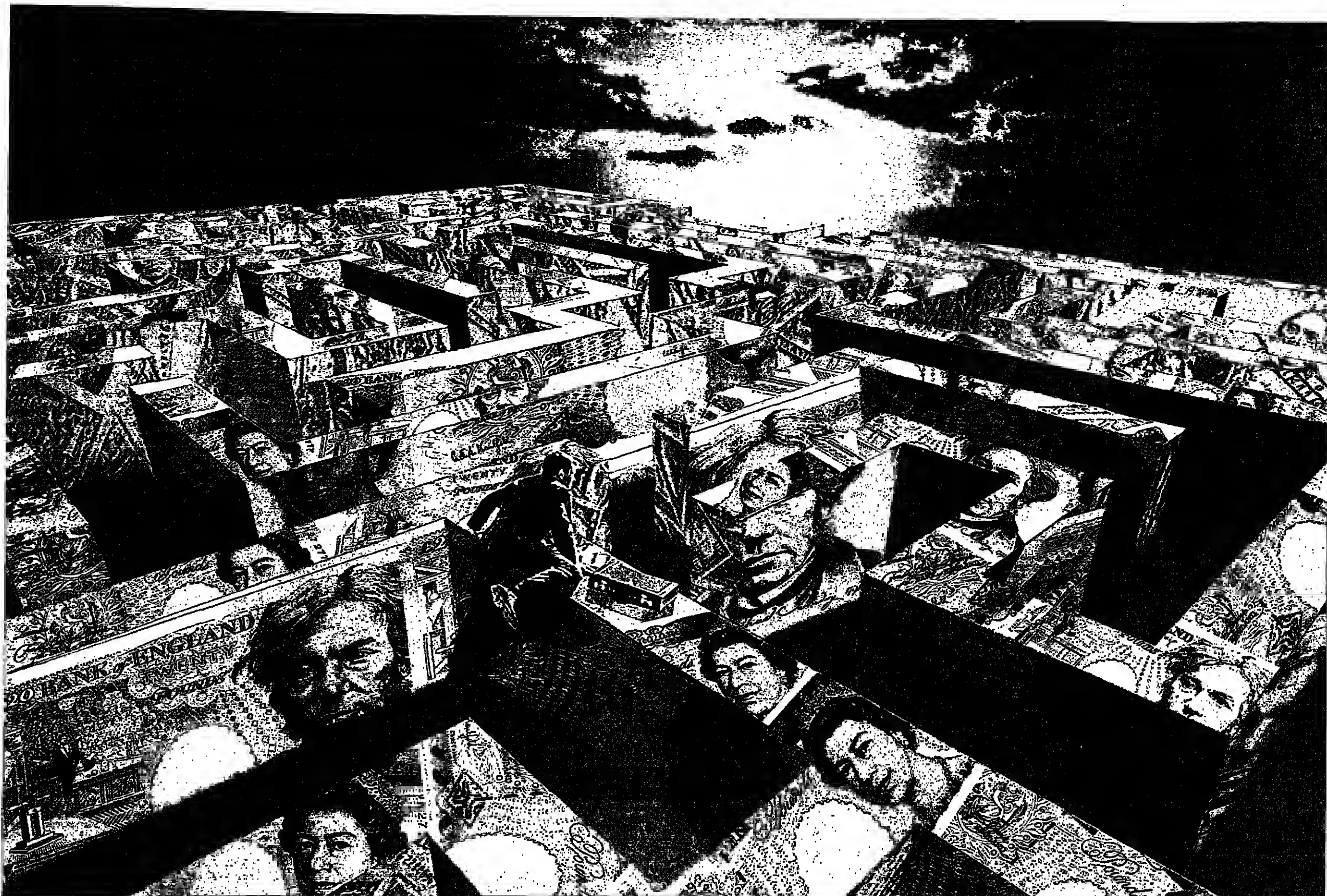
PERSONAL FINANCE NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR



YOUR MONEY

PERSONAL FINANCE, PROPERTY & MOTORING

Saturday 10 January 1998



Ron Lowery/Tony Stone

Hidden treasures in the money maze

Go on, be honest. Like most of us out there your New Year's resolutions probably collapsed within 36 hours of the clock striking midnight. But that needn't mean you have to stay stuck in the labyrinth for ever. Nic Clatti offers a way out.

Insurance companies, mortgage lenders, fund managers and high street banks are all different animals. Yet they have one thing in common. They thrive on our inertia.

They know we have good intentions, that we hate being ripped off, that we can spot a bad deal if we really try. But finding our way out of the thickets can be so time-consuming it sometimes feels easier to stay rooted where we are - and that is how the money men become rich.

The important thing to remind yourself is that the steps you take to improve your finances in 1998 are emphatically not part of a new year's resolution package. Rather, they each involve a series of simple, even if occasionally time-consuming steps. Once

you have sorted out one problem, you can move to the next one. Before you know it, you will be many pounds better off.

Take the first problem: Christmas over-spending syndrome. The chances are you are hundreds of pounds, perhaps even £1,000 in the red on your credit card. Sticking with your traditional issuer means paying the bill off in, say, four stages of £250-odd each month. By the end, you will probably have paid up to £42 interest to your card issuer.

On the other hand, switching the debt to Capital One Bank, which has a one-year offer of 6.9 per cent APR, means repaying the same debt would incur interest of just £15 or so. So that's £25 saved.

Then there is your bank account. For the past 457 years you have been loyal to the high street bank which gave you your first cheque book. The fact is, it pays interest of just 0.5 per cent if you have £1,000 with it. More likely, when you are overdrawn with say, Lloyds, you pay 1.45 per cent a month, plus a further £8, if you are more than a tenner overdrawn.

Again, the solution is simple: Schroders offers a cheque book and 6.4 per cent gross on minimum balances of £1,000. If you are an overdraft merchant, Alliance &

Leicester, while not so generous in the interest stakes, charges only 0.76 per cent and no additional monthly fee. In nearly every case, banks and building societies will fall over themselves to help you transfer your standing orders and direct debits to a new account with them. Try them and see.

So, you are probably £60 to £70 better off already. Funny how the walls on that maze already look smaller. Fancy another go?

Let's take your savings. You have paid off your debts and are now putting money away for a rainy day. You need quick access to it, so shares and suchlike are not high on the list. Alliance & Leicester, so nice when it came to overdrafts, is paying you 4.6 per cent gross on that £1,500 you have tucked away. That is £69 a year before tax. The thing is, Woolwich is paying 7 per cent gross on its Cardsaver account. That is £105 a year before tax, or £36 more.

Plus, you are married. One of you is on higher rate tax, the other is on 23 per cent, or may not be working. Have you filled in a form to have interest paid gross? For a non-taxpayer, that works out at £20 more interest for every £100 paid gross. For higher rate-taxpayers, having an account in your

lower-rated spouse's name saves you £17.

You're on a roll. Take the mortgage next. For the past three years, you have been on the Halifax's variable rate, currently 8.7 per cent. On £50,000 loan, that means payments of £330 a month. A two-year fix, presently available from FirstMortgage, is pegged at 4.7 per cent. That is about £180 a month for two years, reverting thereafter to a variable rate which is presently 0.5 per cent cheaper than the Halifax. So even after two years, you will save almost £20 a month.

Then there is your home and contents insurance. Premium Search, a telephone broker based in Northampton, offers to undercut the cheapest annual quote for combined cover by £50. Easy.

We're really motoring now. Which brings us to car insurance. Last year, inertia meant you stayed with the same insurer. Go on, make a few calls. The chances are you'll save another £50 or so.

By this stage, the hedges on that maze are really small. So small you can step over them with ease. You are many hundreds of pounds a year better off, to the point where you can begin to set aside money for the long term. That means equities, which experts assure us have out-performed de-

posit accounts over longer periods. But where to turn?

Things are now a little more complicated. There are scores of financial products, all of them slightly different from each other. Which is right for you?

At this stage, swallow your pride. You need to talk to a good independent financial adviser. They are not difficult to find. One call will give you a list of three in your area. You may need a few tips on how to pick one. But that comes later. Meantime, get cracking on these ideas. And watch the pounds rolling in while the maze shrinks.

Premium Search 0800 109876; Capital One 0800 669000; Alliance & Leicester Alliance account 0500 959595; Woolwich 0800 222200; FirstMortgage 0800 080088; Schroders 0171 6583301; for a financial adviser near you, call IFA Promotion 0117 971 1177.

The Independent has published a free 'Guide to Making Your Investments Work for You'. The guide, by Steve Lodge, personal finance editor on the Independent on Sunday, is sponsored by Wesleyan Financial Services. It is available by calling 0800 137 9749. Or fill in the coupon on page four.

INSIDE

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11/ROBERT LIEBMAN
Keeping out the beastly buyers

In the July Budget, the Chancellor announced that tax exempt savings schemes will change in April 1999. As a result you may not be able to continue to enjoy the current tax benefits offered by a PEP. However, the Government has announced that a new tax privileged vehicle is to be introduced - the Individual Savings Account, or ISA for short. Full details have yet to be confirmed and we are currently in discussion with the Government as to the future implications for PEPs. The price of investments and the income from them can go down as well as up, you may not get back as much as you invest. The value to you of the benefits will depend on your own circumstances. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance. M&G do not offer investment advice or make any recommendations regarding investments - we only promote the packaged products and services of the M&G marketing group. You should contact your independent financial adviser (if you have one) before investing. Source: M&G UK Fixed Interest sector. *The difference between the buying and selling price of units in the M&G Blue Chip Fund was 0.5% as at 2 January 1998, 0.55% for The M&G Managed Income Fund and 0.45% for The M&G Corporate Bond Fund as at 24th December 1997. Issued by M&G Financial Services Limited (Registered by The Personal Investment Authority). Registered Office: M&G House, Victoria Road, Chelmsford CM1 1FR. M&G Unit Trusts are managed by M&G Securities Limited (Registered by DMO and The Personal Investment Authority).

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[illegible]

COLLECT TO INVEST

A case of luggage fetishism

Indulge yourself in a harmless fetish: collect leather luggage. This is no ordinary turn-on: as John Windsor writes, it's not the material involved that determines the fetishism, but the personal identification with the collectible.

A private collection of no fewer than 154 pieces of modern Louis Vuitton luggage is being offered by Christie's South Kensington this month. There are trunks, suitcases, hold-alls, hat boxes, cruiser bags, shoe cases, brief cases, beauty cases and men's clutch bags – sufficient for a permanently jet-setting *famille nombreuse*.

It is no surprise that the vendor, an anonymous and evidently rich "lady" thought to be of Middle Eastern origin, seems to have developed an addiction to posh luggage. Technically, it is a fetishistic collectible: that is, one that the owner identifies with (not necessarily because much luggage is made of leather).

Old, honey-coloured leather suitcases smelling of spilled perfume and plastered with the stickers of the Orient Express, Cunard and grand hotels in Nice and Nairobi are reminders of a bygone age of gracious living and intrepid travelling – a joy to own and cult objects to be seen with. Luggage made by the French company Louis Vuitton, founded in 1854, has long occupied the top rack of style – without relying on the lure of leather. Throughout its history, the Vuitton family has hob-nobbed with leading fashion designers, explorers, automobile designers, even composers of music, producing custom-made suitcases and trunks covered with the distinctive LV-monogram canvas.

Their concealed compartments and cunning fold-out contraptions tell intimate tales of lives lived to the full. A Louis Vuitton Stokowski travel bureau trunk of 1941 – put into production after being designed for Leopold Stokowski, the avant-garde conductor who brought fame to the Philadelphia Orchestra in the Twenties – sold for £17,000 at a Christie's charity auction of antique trunks in Hong Kong in 1996.

An ingeniously designed writing desk folds into its top, and there is storage for books and files, even a typewriter.

Trunks are a thing of the past – there is none in the forthcoming South Ken sale – but it was Vuitton who designed the first wardrobe trunk in 1875 (having been tipped off by the

couturier Worth that crinolines were on their way out) and they are now collected and used as space-saving bedroom furniture. Some are serving as linen chests at the foot of the bed.

In the past couple of years, according to Suzette Shields of Christie's South Ken, trunks have risen in price from £1,400-£1,500 to around £1,800. A Louis Vuitton wardrobe trunk bound in leather and brass fetched £1,840 (estimate £1,200-£1,800) in South Ken's monthly costume and textiles sale in November. A new Louis Vuitton trunk can cost up to £8,500.

At auction, this is still a dealer's market, so private buyers stand a chance of carrying off vintage luggage at below retail prices. A Vuitton suitcase from the Twenties will probably cost you £500-£700. It is not only the Hong Kong Chinese that go for them. Ms Shields reports that the Japanese are big bidders. They will be much in evidence at this month's big sale.

Sotheby's also sells luggage, both in its costume and textile sales and its sales of collectors' vehicles and automobiles. Auctioneer Toby Wilson laments: "Swanning through London airport with a Louis Vuitton suitcase is a statement of style, status and wealth. I know a lady who bought a

set of Vuitton luggage at Sotheby's specially for her honeymoon, then sold it privately when she got back. It was for appearance – she just wanted that honeymoon to be an event to remember."

In this month's sale of Louis Vuitton at South Ken: a lot of four pieces – hard suitcase in LV fabric, bound in leather and brass, the interior labelled Louis Vuitton Paris Nice 931732 (shown here); a beauty case – the interior lined in beige leather with a removable panel between two sections and adjustable compartments for flasks; a handbag and a make-up bag. Estimate: £900-£1,200 the lot.

The Vuitton company is still a style pioneer – which augurs well for secondhand Vuitton prices. Just as Gaston, Louis Vuitton's son, invited leading artists and designers such as Cristoforo to design trendy bottles and silver accessories for his luggage, the Vuitton company celebrated the centenary of its famous monogram last year by commissioning designs from seven designers, including Vivienne Westwood, Helmut Lang and Manolo Blahnik. Westwood, characteristically, designed a bum bag to be worn like a bustle, preferably atop exposed buttocks. Flagship Vuitton stores are

to open in Bond Street and the Champs Elysées, Paris, early next year.

Vintage motorists are among the most enthusiastic bidders at auction. Vuitton designed trunks contoured to fit the hoods of limousines by Rolls-Royce, Peugeot and Hotchkiss with hvelled lids that kept out dust and

rain. There were ice boxes, footrest cases – rubberised top for feet, stowed on the floor in front of the back seat – and above all, picnic sets, which have acquired a vogue of their own. Just the thing for Ascot.

Sotheby's does a nifty line in them at its sales of collectors' vehicles and automobiles. Picnic sets by Vuitton are rare, but there are plenty by Coracle and some by Mappin & Webb, Drew, Sirram, Barrett and the noted Finnegans. The ones that sell best look the most nostalgic, with shiny silver-bound milk bottle and raked crockery and cutlery.

The auctioneers know the ones most likely to sell – they are illustrated in the catalogue. At Sotheby's, a Barrett with not only a kettle but a compact saucepan, nest of glasses, three ceramic condiment sets, butter jar, brandy and whisky bottles, hip flask and corkscrew, fetched £747 in September's vehicle sale. At least the lifestyle that denotes is not a thing of the past.

Never pick up any old leather luggage or wicker picnic sets by the handle: leather fatigue and woodworm in the wicker could mean, warns Mr Wilson, "that you are left with the handle in your hand and the rest of it still on the floor".

Christie's South Kensington: A Collection of Louis Vuitton Luggage, Tuesday 27 January, 4pm after the costume and textile sale (2pm) in which there are 25 lots of luggage. 85 Old Brompton Road, London SW7 (0171-581 7611). Sotheby's Collectors' Vehicles and Automobiles, RAF Museum, Hendon, Monday 30 March (10.30am).

INTERNET INVESTOR



Home loans on-line

ROBIN AMLÖT

Just over a month ago, I was writing about using the World Wide Web to find the right mortgage. Then, it was not possible to arrange a mortgage on-line. Now it is. Birmingham-based broker Paragon Mortgages has launched the first mortgage which is available exclusively on-line through its website. Paragon offers a two-year fixed rate, at 4.59 per cent, for loans of up to 70 per cent.

This is not only the first mortgage directly available on-line, it is also among the lowest offers available. For those with smaller deposits, Paragon is offering a two-year fixed rate of 4.99 per cent for loans of up to 90 per cent.

As with all fixed-rate loans, there is a thumping penalty clause for early redemption. In this instance, if you pay off the mortgage within six years, you will be faced with paying the equivalent of six months' interest repayments. However, the loan is portable to a new property.

Through the website you can apply on-line for a decision in principle within a day. The on-line "agreement-in-principle" form gives Paragon enough information to do a quick credit check. There is no charge and no obligation on you to proceed any further.

Providing Paragon agrees your proposal, the next step

is to download a full application form. At this stage there is an application fee of £100 and a completion fee of £100 for loans of up to £50,000, or £150 for loans up to £100,000. Although Paragon charges no valuation fee, you will have to pay legal costs which may exceed £250. Buildings and contents insurance is compulsory.

Paragon also has a range of discounts, cashbacks and fixes. Full details are available on the website.

At the same time as Paragon launched its fixed-rate mortgage, the Staffordshire Building Society began taking its first tentative steps on the Web. The society has assets of just over £1bn and is a "committed mutual". As such it offers established customers a discounted "loyalty mortgage" interest rate.

Staffordshire's site offers basic background on the society and its ethos. So far, there is only limited information about its mortgages and savings products and none at all about its personal equity plan or credit card. But added-value content is likely to follow now the society's site is operational.

Paragon Mortgages:
www.paragon-mortgages.co.uk
Staffordshire:
www.staffordshirebuildingociety.co.uk

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To profit from endowments you need a policy of no surrender

For holders of with-profits savings plans and pensions, the annual round of bonus declarations is a bitter-sweet ritual.

Announcements by insurers of how much they will be paying policyholders whose plans mature this year also offer a clue as to how much the rest of us stand to get in a few years' time. The news is both good and bad, as Andrew Verity explains.

For those who have held endowments or self-employed pensions for the last 25 years, this year's season may be the sweetest ever. When policies were bought in 1973, the stock market was about to hit its lowest point of the last three decades. But since then, a long bull-run has produced spectacular returns which should make those policyholders very glad they bought their with-profit endowments.

A policyholder who started a £50-a-month, 25-year endowment with GA Life in 1973 would this year collect a stunning payout of £120,784 – on contributions totalling just £15,000. That is 5 per cent more than last year's record payout. It is equivalent to an annual interest rate of 14.2 per cent, every year since 1973.

Friends Provident, Norwich Union and Scottish Provident have also announced payouts on 25-year policies which equate to paying 13 per cent in interest every year. Why does anyone hold long-term money with a building society or bank, paying less than half of that rate?

But for savers who started a policy recently, the sweet taste of this year's bonus begins to sour. Holders of with-profits policies get an annual bonus – a guaranteed percentage of their money resembling an interest rate – based on the growth of the with-profits fund which holds their savings. It is high bonuses in the past which have allowed life offices to pay out record amounts this year.

But for future savers, the picture is not so pretty. With the FTSE growing by 22 per cent last year, policyholders might be forgiven for thinking they should receive healthy annual bonuses. Yet this year, against expectations, almost all life offices will cut them. Despite growth of 20 per cent in the with-profits fund last year, GA's annual bonus on life policies falls from 6.75 to 6.25 per cent. Norwich Union's falls to 6 from

6.5 per cent. What, a policyholder might ask, is going on?

The life offices do have an explanation. Actuaries, the powerful figures who decide how much money to distribute, will only pay guaranteed annual bonuses if they think they can be supported by strong investment growth in future. Almost universally, the actuaries now say that double-digit growth can no longer be expected.

The reasons are two-fold. First, life insurers have now lost faith in the dazzling returns of the 1970s and 1980s. Actuaries point to the drop in long-term yields on gilts (government securities) to their lowest level for decades of 6.25 per cent; that reflects the market view that entering monetary union will mean lower inflation, lower interest rates and lower investment growth over the next 15 years.

Second, life insurers have in recent years kept bonus rates higher than the long-term returns on their funds appear to justify. So much so that cautious offices such as Sun Life last year accused competitors of maintaining insupportable bonuses in an effort to entice new customers.

The downward shift in

bonuses is already shown in maturity payouts to 10-year policies. Here, returns equate to an annual interest rate of 10 per cent rather than 13 per cent. Actuaries predict that in future these will become even smaller.

Richard Harvey, chief executive of Norwich Union, explains: "Our view of the long-term investment outlook has led us to reconsider the level of annual bonus payable. We believe annual bonuses need to be at a level which we can reasonably expect to achieve in the future."

With annual bonuses at 6 per cent or less, a policyholder might be forgiven for thinking an account with Standard Life Bank, or Tesco's, or Direct Line would pay better. But for those who are sure they can afford to save over a long time, this is not true. While life offices are cutting their annual bonuses, terminal bonuses – the extra amount paid if a policy gets to maturity – are going up.

Unfortunately, more than a third of policyholders with endowments surrender their policies before five years are up. Less than 20 per cent keep up payments for 25 years. For the hundreds of thousands who surrender policies early, the terminal bonus is a phantom.

If the policy is instead sold to someone else, a higher value can be had by selling the endowment through a market maker. For policyholders forced to cash in their policies, the message is straightforward. With endowments, you should never surrender.

| Payouts on 10 and 25-year endowment policies* | | | | |
|---|---------|-------------------------|----------|----------|
| Life Office | 10-year | Equivalent annual yield | 25-year | Equv yld |
| GA Life | £10,305 | 10.4% | £120,784 | 14.2% |
| Norwich Union | £10,063 | 10.0% | £100,247 | 13.0% |
| Friends Provident | £9,919 | 9.7% | £106,188 | 13.4% |
| Scottish Provident | £9,508 | 8.9% | £94,820 | 12.7% |

*With payments of £50 a month, maturing in 1998



THE JONATHAN DAVIES COLUMN

The danger of being too bullish

Anyone who writes about stock markets on a regular basis is, as I remarked last week, liable to make mistakes. Error comes with the territory, and multiplies exponentially the further forward you look.

Some mistakes, however, are more egregious than others: my apologies therefore for the inadvertent statement in my column last week that the long-run real rate of return from the stock market has been 67 per cent per annum. Would it were so! The actual figure, of course, and the one I originally put in the column, before the gremlins struck, is 6 per cent to 7 per cent – and a very nice figure it is too, especially when compounded over a number of years. Nothing else in investment, as we know, beats the stock market for long-term capital appreciation.

Nothing alters the fact, either, that averages are averages and when they are exceeded consistently, they have to be followed by periods of less than average performance. Looking back on the year in the markets in 1997, we should be grateful for the fact that, while nearly all the market forecasters got the London and New York markets wrong, they all at least erred on the right side – by underestimating what a good year it proved to be all round.

As the chart shows, it was a year when shares (as measured by the All Share Index) produced a total real return of 23.6 per cent. (Total real return measures the combined return from dividends and capital appreciation, after allowing for the extent to which inflation has eroded the purchasing power of your investment.) This, to put it in context, is the 10th time in the past 16 years that the All Share Index has produced a real return in excess of 20 per cent per annum.

Last year might have been a good one for the All Share index, but there have been six others which have been even better since 1980! Given that there have been only two years during the last 18 (1990 and 1994) when the All Share Index has actually fallen, it is evident that we are living through

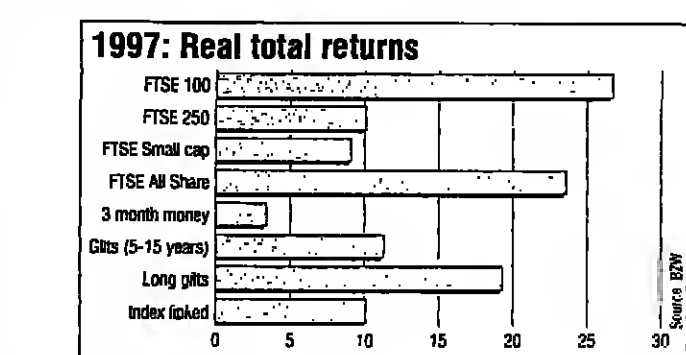
a bull market of quite remarkable length and intensity.

The average real total return from the All Share index since 1980, according to BZW, has been 19.4 per cent – that is almost three times the long-run historical average.

The record in the United States has been just as good. Given that many investors have never experienced a full-blown bear market, it is perhaps not surprising that the average mutual fund investor in the United States believes, according to consumer surveys, that putting his money into the stock mar-

ket is likely to produce an average capital gain of 30 per cent over just one year, but every year into the future!

History and simple arithmetic, alas, tells us that this simply is not feasible – though it also tells us that there is nothing wrong in enjoying the good times while they last.



ket is likely to produce an average capital gain of 30 per cent over just one year, but every year into the future!

History and simple arithmetic, alas, tells us that this simply is not feasible – though it also tells us that there is nothing wrong in enjoying the good times while they last.

Just don't, for prudence's sake, assume that they will last for ever. Like me, you are probably no great fan of insurance companies and have more than a little difficulty in understanding how the bonuses on your endowment and other policies are calculated. But the fact that many of the higher providers are now cutting their annual reversionary bonuses, while paying out large and still handsome terminal bonuses, is not a surprise. They are right to warn that the exceptional market returns of the past 15 years are highly unlikely to persist for the next

done for most of the 1990s.

The so-called small cap revival which is always expected to materialise in the later stages of a bull market has yet to appear, though it will probably do so eventually.

The other feature to note is the strong performance of gilts. They may have been overshadowed by the exceptional performance of the stock market, but I am happy to say (having ventured to praise their merits on several occasions) that 1997 was also a quite excellent year for gilts too. Real returns of 19.3 per cent for long-dated gilts, 11.3 per cent for shorter maturities and 10.8 per cent on index-linked made it one of the best years in recent memory: only 1982 and 1993 produced clearly higher real returns. Even though, in practice, the stock market has done better in the past 12 months, I stick to my view that, adjusting for

risk, someone faced with the choice between the two classes of asset a year ago would have been better advised to go for the safer gilts option.

Gilts also did well on an international comparison. They produced the highest returns of any of the large bond markets (including the United States, Germany, Japan and France). The election of a user-friendly Labour Government, and its prompt decision to hand over monetary policy to an independent Bank of England, was a crucial factor in underpinning the already favourable economic and inflation environment.

While short-term interest rates are rising, longer-term interest rates are still on a downward trend – in part reflecting the view that the new monetary policy arrangements are doing their job at ensuring that inflation does not rear its head again in the future (hence also the exceptional performance of index-linked gilts).

Is the gilt party over yet? Without wishing to predict another year as good as last year's, I have to say that I rather doubt it. Many of the fundamental arguments for gilts still look attractive, and the current financial crisis in the Far East hardly counts against them the worse it gets, the bigger the impact on the rest of the world, and the likelier it is that bond yields will fall.

Despite their strong recent performance, UK bond yields are still the highest of any country in Europe: although we are committed to staying out of the first wave of European monetary union, there are reasons to expect that our bond yields will continue to converge with those that are signing up for that high-risk enterprise. And while short-term inflationary pressures are clearly rising, I cannot for the moment see any real clouds on the longer-term horizon. My only worry is that many institutional investors seem to be thinking the same way – and one prefers not, in this business, to be part of a consensus view. Since the one thing we do know is that consensus expectations, like consensus forecasts, never come true.

UNDERSTANDING THE STOCK MARKET

Doubling the shares doesn't double the money

Once upon a time, you owned 500 shares in a company. Suddenly, without quite knowing how, you now own twice as many shares in the same firm. Yet their value is half what it was. Confused? John Andrew explains.

It was a terrible start to the weekend. James had not checked the price of his shares for a week or so. All was well since he last looked. There were a few modest gains, a couple had barely moved, while there were a few small losses. The last share price he looked at nearly caused him to choke on his croissant. Two weeks ago it was trading at 300p – now, it was 151p.

He had 1,000 shares in Widgets plc – he could not believe the dramatic fall. Although he had only scanned the financial pages in the last fortnight, he had seen no detrimental news about the company. Then the post arrived. One envelope contained a share certificate for another 1,000 shares in Widgets.

The company had undertaken what in City parlance is called a scrip issue. Technically, this is a capitalisation of reserves. This sounds complicated but it is very straightforward.

Suppose a company begins life with the issue of 1 million shares at £1 each. The proceeds will raise £1m, which we will assume is used to buy assets for the business. Let us now put the clock forward a few years.

Assume that over that period the company has done well and while the shareholders received dividends, the company also ploughed back £9m of profits into the business. The accounts still show share capital of £1m and reserves of £9m. This is a simplification, but, suppose the company's shares are now priced £10 (the share-

holders' funds are £1m + £9m = £10m: £10m divided by 1 million = £10 per share.)

Let us suppose the company's directors announce a "scrip issue" and every shareholder will receive one extra share for every one they own. In City parlance this is called a "one-for-one scrip issue". Each shareholder's holding in the company will double. The company is still worth £10m, but, the number of shares has increased from 1 million to 2 million. Each share is now worth £5 (£10m divided by 2 million shares). In other words, shareholders are no better off as their holding may have doubled, but the share price has halved.

So why does a company have a scrip issue? The popular explanation is that the shares are considered "expensive". In other words, £10 a share may be a barrier for new investors, whereas they will buy at £5. This defies logic, but if you look at the price of shares quoted on the London Stock Exchange, you will notice that prices are generally under 1,000p.

Nevertheless, a scrip issue can have a psychological spin-off which benefits shareholders. Suppose that our imaginary company before the scrip issue had a dividend of 43p per share. After the issue, if things remained unaltered, the dividend would halve to 21.5p. The market could take this as a sign that dividends will increase the next year to 22p per share so as to avoid a fractional dividend. To reflect the increase in the dividend payable, the share price could rise slightly.

So what does an investor have to do when a company announces a scrip issue? The answer is usually "nothing". Shareholders will receive notification of the scrip issue from the company. This includes a timetable for the procedure. One of the pertinent pieces of information will be the "records date". James ignored his notification.

All those on the shareholder's register at that time will be entitled to the scrip issue. Five to 10 days afterwards the shares will be quoted "exscrip" on the market. This means that the price of the shares has been adjusted for the issue. The letters "xc", where "c" stands for "capitalisation", will appear after the price of the shares quoted in the press.

As soon as the new certificates are ready, they will be mailed to shareholders. Those wishing to sell their entire holding before their new certificate arrives can do so, for stock-brokers will be aware of the situation. However, it must be made clear when the sale in-

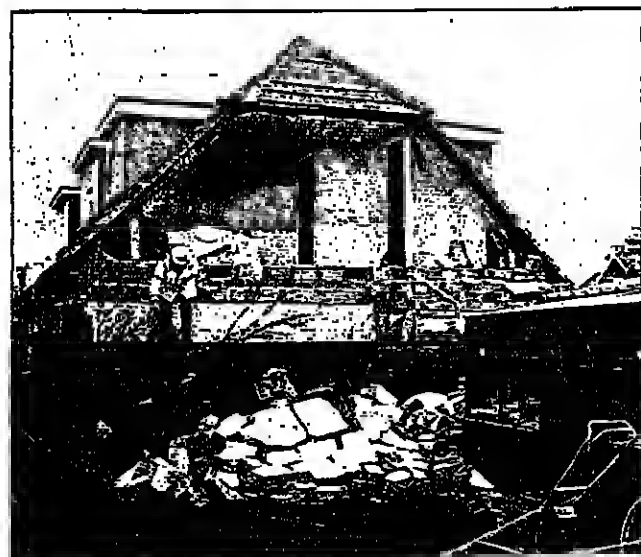
It defies logic, but if you look at shares you will notice prices are generally under 1,000p

structions are given that you wish to sell "old" shares, which are equivalent to a certain number of "new" shares. When the new certificate arrives, it must be forwarded to the broker who dealt with the sale.

Investors who sell shares before the "records date" are not entitled to the scrip issue. Should the company's share register not have been updated in time and consequently a share certificate for the "new" shares is received, this must be forwarded to the broker who handled the sale.

It is only when shares in a company are bought or sold during the period of the scrip issue that matters become complicated. Your broker will always be pleased to answer any questions that you have and to give guidance.

How to weather storm damage to your property this winter



Cruel blow, and more damage is expected

If your home is one of those lashed by the storms of the past week, what should you do? Guy Dennis makes some suggestions.

Andrew Wilkinson was in bed when his house started collapsing around his ears. "A terrific crash woke me up. I went to the window and saw my chimney in the garden and there was debris everywhere. The chimney came down in the 1987 storms as well and I can't believe it's happened again."

His home in Selsey, West Sussex, sustained damage estimated at £18,000 as a result of a freak tornado two days ago. Luckily, he was insured and his repair bills will be paid by his insurer, Cornhill. As storms swept across the UK this

week causing an estimated £500m of damage, others may not be so lucky.

What should you do if you are similarly affected? Be ready to talk: this is the basic advice from insurance companies to their policyholders. In other words, as soon as possible after your home is damaged by storms, you should contact your insurance company.

Nearly all insurers have 24-hour helplines, but it is worth checking. A survey for Cornhill found that 40 per cent of people were unaware that their insurer had such helplines.

Emergency repairs are the first issue faced by victims of storm damage. The Association of British Insurers (ABI), the industry trade body, advises that reasonable costs of temporary emergency repairs will generally be paid by insurance companies.

The ABI interprets "reasonable

costs" as being those needed to stop any damage getting worse. However, for repairs over £500 it recommends insurance companies should always be contacted before the work is undertaken.

Temporary repairs carried out by the DIY inclined should also be covered. If you board up windows or hire water extractors, for example, keep the receipts – they could form part of your claim.

In a worst case scenario, when your home becomes uninhabitable, insurers should cover the costs of temporary accommodation. This too is often qualified by the word "reasonable" – do not expect a five-star hotel. Accommodation should take into account the quality of your home, however.

With emergencies over, you can start to look at the issue of permanent repairs to property, but beware. If you've suffered from the storms then cowboys

may head your way in a gold rush of their own. Mark Barratt, chairman of the National Federation of Builders, warns that "unscrupulous 'cowboy' builders always try to take advantage of home owners shocked and hattered by violent weather". He recommends using a reputable builder from a recognised trade association. Many insurers have lists of such builders in your area.

Flooding is another serious problem. Flooded houses need drying, but drying things too quickly causes further damage. Leave the windows open until mid-afternoon if the weather permits – the air is drier outside. But leave the heating off while windows are open to save energy.

Doors and drawers should be opened and you should also clear air bricks of any debris. Dehumidifiers are good for flooded houses as they dry the

air without causing heat damage. They should be used with the windows closed.

Damaged furniture and fittings should be stored in a dry place as they will need to be inspected and may have a salvage value even if irreparable.

Floors may also need to be looked at: suspended wooden floors need ventilating and floorboards may have to be lifted to dry the floor thoroughly. A dehumidifier may be useful here.

The wide-scale nature of the damage has led to mounting claims for insurance companies. The ABI believes total costs amount to £300m to £400m for the storms since Christmas Eve, while other estimates are even higher.

And it may get worse. The message from insurers, both in the long and short term is: be prepared for more of the same. The storms we have seen this winter are not yet over.

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So, have the experts anything to be proud of? Well, yes

Just over a year ago, 'The Independent' asked five top independent financial advisers to take on several hypothetical investors. Twelve months on, Nic Cutti discovers how savers would have fared with each adviser and then carries out the acid test: double or quits.

They always seem to sit in padded leather chairs that bob about as they speak, they talk confidently about markets, sectors and what have you. But when chips are down, are independent financial advisers really any good at advising their clients?

Last year, *The Independent* created different scenarios for five advisers and gave them each a notional £10,000 to look after. The aim was – and is – not to make them look stupid by comparing them to each other but to see how well they met their clients' needs.

We also assumed that savers would not only want their investments to be reviewed at the end of the year but, to complicate matters further, they might also have a further £10,000 to tuck away this year. Here's what three members of our panel suggested. Next week, the spotlight turns on our two remaining financial advisers.



A head start: Investing for future school fees is long-term aim and emerging market funds could be considered

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid



'Consider reducing a mortgage'

Philippa Gee, of Gee & Company

Philippa Gee, at Gee & Company in Shrewsbury, was aiming for long-term growth for a couple with a relatively conservative investment strategy, but with a slight element of risk. She chose to place £5,000 in Schroder's UK Equity Fund, and £4,000 in Invesco's European Growth Fund, which are both pebble. A further £1,000 went into Fidelity's Latin America Fund.

As at the end of December, the Schroder fund stood at £5,556.46, Invesco's £4,000 was up £600.12 and Fidelity's fund stood at £1,230. In all, the gain was £13.85 per cent after charges, many of

which would have been rebated back to the client anyway, as Gee & Co operates on a fee-paying basis.

Philippa says: "Both the Schroder and Invesco recommendations have continued to meet the criteria they were given last year, while the Latin American fund ended the year on a more volatile point. Nevertheless, it met the intention of taking only one tenth of the investment and produced the strongest growth."

"Our aim is to achieve long-term growth by retaining the holdings already recommended and building on the existing investments to develop the portfolio further."

"This year, we would recommend £3,000 into the Mercury Eastern European Fund. This is denominated in German marks and carries both some currency and equity risk. To provide exposure to fixed interest holdings and balance this, we would recommend £5,000 be invested into the Aberdeen Fixed Interest unit trust, which is pebble. The aim is to produce a relatively high income, which is reinvested."

"Finally, M&G have had a troubled few years but have since made various changes to their funds. We recommend £2,000 into M&G's Growth fund, which is pebble. One final point, is that with interest rates

likely to rise slightly this year, investors could consider reducing their mortgages with part of the lump sum available and channel part of their monthly savings into the various investments."



'Good prospects in Europe'

Bhupinder Anand at Anand Associates

Bhupinder Anand, a former IFA of the Year, is based at Anand Associates, in central London. For a couple also seeking long-term growth but willing to accept much more risk, he suggested £3,500 into Schroder's Far Eastern Growth unit trust, plus a further £3,500 into Baring Europe Select and a final £3,000 into Johnson Fry's Slater UK Growth unit trust.

Johnson Fry's fund showed gains of 21.4 per cent over 1997, while Barings delivered returns of 16.1 per cent. Sadly, this excellent performance was let down by Far Eastern markets, leaving Schroder down by

20.25 per cent. In all, Bhupinder's £10,000 delivered net gains of £670, which, as he slowly maintains, is still better than a building society account.

He says: "Generally, two of the three main investments have delivered well and I would not touch them. The Far East has not been good. But while I would not recommend investing more in that area, I think we should view this fund as a long-term investment over at least five to seven years."

"As for the next £10,000, I would suggest a further £3,000 into the Johnson Fry fund. It is a long-term performer, with a strong analytical bias, which should do well even in a volatile market. It also has significant exposure to smaller companies, which many people feel should begin to catch up with larger-cap stocks this year."

"Next, I would put £4,000 into Old Mutual's European Growth fund. There are good prospects in Europe and Old Mutual, a consistently good performer in this area, tends to look at quality stocks and would be a good counterbalance to the Barings fund."

"Third, would recommend £2,000 into the Henderson Global Technology fund. This is quite a volatile fund, one that in a

real exposure you might switch in and out of. This year, I think, is a time to be in."

"Finally, I would suggest £1,000 in the First Russian Investment Trust, offered by a fund manager called Pictet. This is a bit of a gamble. But research by the fund managers shows the share price of some of the companies is less than 1 per cent of their net asset values. The share prices simply do not reflect their resources. Clearly this is a volatile investment. But investors whom I placed in this fund over the past year or so have shown returns over 100 per cent."



Roddy Kohn at Kohn Cougar

'Property will give growth'

Roddy Kohn, an IFA at Kohn Cougar, in Bristol, who is also on the board of the financial advisers' watchdog, the Personal Investment Authority, was there to help a younger couple who wanted to save for the

children's future education needs. They did not need access to their funds for at least six or seven years.

He recommended just two stocks, Bankers' Investment Trust from Henderson Investors, a pebble fund in which he suggested £5,000 should be placed. His other selection was Kleinwort Benson's Charter Investment Trust, also pebble, for an equal amount.

The Henderson fund would have been worth £5,965, with net income reinvested at the beginning of January, a rise of almost 20 per cent, while Kleinwort's investment trust delivered gains of 23.37 per cent, rising in value to £6,168.71.

Roddy says: "I think this couple should keep their first £10,000 where it is. Both funds have some way to go and there is a danger in constantly switching in that you incur initial charges whenever you do so."

"But for the next £10,000, I would advise £3,000 to go into a M&G Corporate Bond PER with income reinvested. This is a defensive strategy for what may be a more volatile year investment-wise."

"A further £4,000 could go into the TR Property Trust, which is also pebble. I think property will give good growth over the next 18 months or so, while also enhancing the same defensive strategy, acting as a balance to last year's investments and this year's remaining selection."

"For the last £3,000, I would recommend some exposure to emerging markets. Therefore, £1,000 should go into Templeton's Latin American trust, with the same amounts into Fleming's Chinese Investment Trust and Fidelity Asian Values. All of these funds have been knocked sideways in the past few months and there is the prospect of long-term recovery in each case."

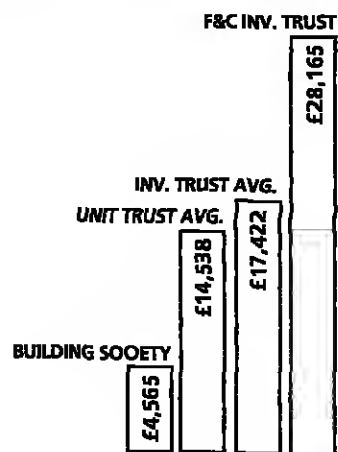
"However, it may be that there will be further weaknesses in months to come. It may make more sense to keep the remaining £3,000 in a high-interest deposit account and either invest in a few months, or dribble the money in gradually over the year."

Next week: Kean Seager at Whitechurch Securities, in Bristol, and Cherry Dodd, at Bradford & Bingley's IFA arm, give their tips for 1998.

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BARGAIN BASEMENT

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Flemings, the investment trusts specialist, is offering investors a 40 per cent discount on the fee they would normally be charged for selling shares in National

Power and Powergen and reinvesting the proceeds in one of the company's 19 trusts. The charge of £12.50 falls to £7.50 until the end of the month, with combined household sales charged £7.50. Call 0500 500161.

Barclaycard is launching a 24-hour telephone "travel shop" which guarantees that if a pack-

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Avoid being mauled by the tiger economies

The next 12 months could be a fertile period for investors, but there's an injured tiger loose in the garden. While prospects look reasonable in the developed Western economies, the Asian tigers, with their economic problems, could still hurt the unwary. **Guy Dennis reports on investment prospects in 1998.**

The worst news from the Far East may have been and gone but the dangers are not over. Warn fund managers. Some argue that the repercussions of the past few months' economic turmoil may still take time to impact fully and there could be further problems from the region.

"Our starting point [globally] is what's happening in Asia, which in terms of investment influences in the coming year is probably going to be the single most important in terms of what happens to equities," says Richard Urwin, head of economic research at Gartmore.

Clearly, the Far East itself is a risky bet, but with possible repercussions for the rest of the world, caution is needed. The three main contenders for investment are the UK, Europe and the USA.

The UK and Europe are investment front-runners, although neither is likely to rise dramatically and there is debate over which will deliver better returns. Europe has much to commend it, with companies there expected to deliver good returns.

Simon Key, chief investment officer at Framlington, explains: "There is a fundamental change in the way that European companies are being run. The restructuring that's going on in European countries in anticipation of economic and monetary union - and also because of shareholder activism - means that companies are being run more in the interests of shareholders."

However, others argue that the problem with Europe is that many of its advantages may have been anticipated and potential future gains in share prices may already have been factored in.

Andrea McNee, investment director at Britannia Investment Managers, says this is a key factor favouring the UK. "The UK probably looks the best in terms

of valuation. Although Europe probably has reasonably strong earnings flows coming up, it's actually priced in fairly fully."

She expects the UK's FTSE 100 share index to rise to 5,500 by the end of 1998 and a similar figure is predicted by NatWest Stockbrokers, where Jeremy Batstone, head of research, forecasts "5,500 or 5,600, so if you add dividend payments on top of that we're looking at a total return of maybe 11 or 12 per cent. So, a good but noo-vintage year."

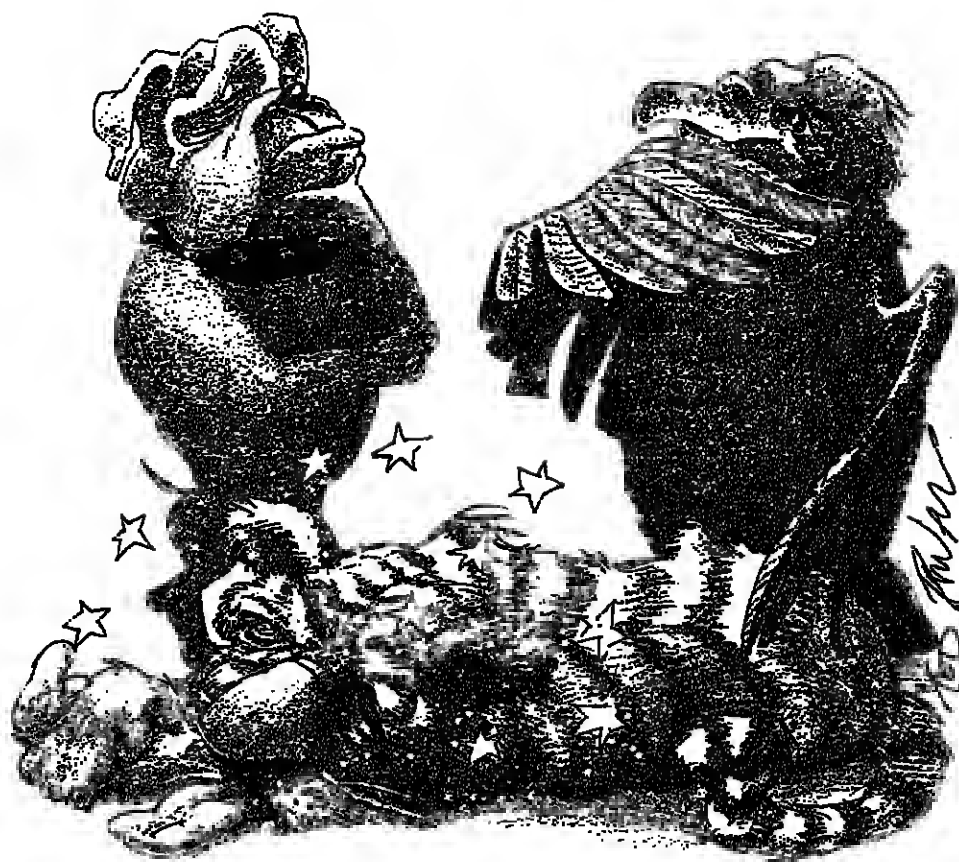
The UK and Europe may look stronger, but investors should not ignore the USA. It may not appear so attractive, as expectations of corporate profits decrease, but it still offers opportunities. Investing in the USA spreads risk, and its huge domestic market may be less plagued by the Asian turmoil. It should also be seen as a long-term investment prospect.

There may also be interesting opportunities in specific sectors. Andrew Barker, chairman of the Association of Investment Trust Companies and director of Foreign and Colonial Investment Trusts, points to healthcare and financial services as areas which could do well in the US this year. There may also be opportunities in the smaller companies sector - the huge domestic market allows small firms to grow rapidly.

There has been some talk of a possible revival in the UK for less highly-capitalised companies. Last year the FTSE index of top 100 companies massively outperformed the small and mid-market sectors. Despite this hoped-for revival in the small companies sector in 1998, some experts doubt whether any outperformance will match the growth in the FTSE 100 index compared to smaller stocks last year.

Investors should be careful, as Mr Batstone, of NatWest Stockbrokers, explains: "In general, you would expect smaller and medium-cap companies to do reasonably well, but we are being very cautious about those two and would suggest that investors stick to those small caps that seem to have a niche in their chosen area of activity."

"The market is in no mood to take prisoners with small caps as with large caps so if a smaller company comes out with a profits warning then that company is panned by the markets. One has to be selective and the golden rule for investors in these sectors is if you're not sure, then reduce your risk by spreading your portfolio."



The lure of cheap markets

While most investors will view the Asian economies with caution, and as a potential menace to world stock markets, some may be inclined to see the Far East as a bargain basement. If this applies to you, then beware.

Richard Urwin, head of research at Gartmore, warns: "In straight valuation terms many Asian markets look cheap. They look cheap on historic earnings. [Their prices relative to earnings] are quite low at present but we think you're going to see substantial declines in earnings in a number of [Far Eastern] countries and the potentially attractive valuations you're looking at are spurious in reality."

Of course, buying into Far Eastern markets when they reach rock bottom could offer huge returns, but

knowing when the markets have bottomed is the million dollar question; nobody has the answer yet.

Emerging markets elsewhere may offer a better bet if you want to risk some money for possible high returns. Latin America is a favourite among experts. One economist suggests that the lack of research in certain areas of Latin America might mean that gains there have yet to be anticipated.

Investors should be careful in 1998, and should do their best to avoid the problems of Asia. Tigers are camouflaged - it gives them an element of surprise. Investors for 1998 should act carefully, if they want to avoid surprises. If they do so they could see reasonable returns.

- Guy Dennis

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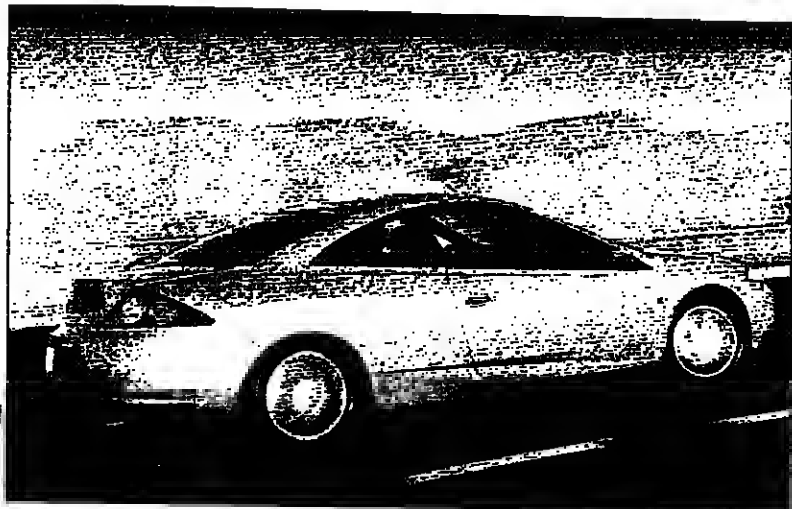
FirstMortgage, the telephone mortgage lender, has launched a three-year fixed mortgage, pegged at 5.8 per cent. Thereafter charges move to the variable rate, currently 8.25 per cent. FirstMortgage also offers a two-year rate, fixed at 4.7 per cent. Call 0800 080088.

Policy Portfolio, buyers and sellers of traded endowment policies, is offering a free pamphlet for people forced to cash in their with-profits policies because they have been made redundant. Call 0181 343 4567.

Northern Rock is launching new rates for unsecured loans. The APR charged ranges from 9.9 per cent APR on loans above £5,000 to £16.9 per cent APR for loans below £3,000. Payment protection must be taken out to secure this rate. Otherwise rates range from 19.9 per cent to 12.7 per cent APR.

*Source: Micropal/LGIM, on an offer to bid basis based on all PEP charges with gross income re-invested from 01.11.95 (since launch) to 01.12.97. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance. From 06.04.99 tax credits will no longer be able to be reclaimed by PEPs investing in equity based unit trusts. Both capital and income values may go down as well as up and you may not get back the amount invested. All comparisons of cost apply to PEPs investing wholly in unit trusts. Full written details are available on request. All statements are correct as at 01.12.97. The Government published a consultative document in December 1997 on proposals for Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) to be launched in April 1999. The terms and limits for converting an existing PEP into an ISA are being considered as part of the consultation. Legal & General (Direct) Limited, Registered in England No. 2702080. Registered Office: Temple Court, 11 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4N 4TP. Representative only of the Legal & General marketing group, members of which are regulated by the Personal Investment Authority and IMRO for the purposes of recommending, advising on and selling life assurance and investment products bearing Legal & General's name.

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Detroit spinners: stars of Motown's motor show were the Ford Cougar, far left, Chrysler Chrono, left, and VW's reinvention of the classic Beetle, below

Beetles top the Motown charts

The Detroit Motor Show is usually treated as a fanfare for America's motoring giants. This year, however, Uncle Sam was upstaged by VW's reborn Beetle, as Gavin Green reports.

Volkswagen's New Beetle, successor to the only good thing that came out of Germany in the Thirties, finally made its public debut at this week's Detroit Motor Show, after four years of hype.

Visually similar but mechanically miles apart from the original Beetle – conceived by Adolf Hitler and Ferdinand Porsche as a "people's car" – the New Beetle is a VW Golf-based "designer" car aimed at those who want to cut a dash, while also conveying a friendly, smiling image. VW describes the new car as "optimism on wheels" and it will be marketed as a cute lifestyle accessory for those who want some emotion in their transport.

This is just as well, for, although it's a cheerful little thing and will no doubt sell well, it has little practical virtue. The Beetle-like styling, with the fall-away rear, gives virtually no rear headroom for adults, and a tiny boot. The price will be slightly higher than that of a similarly sized Golf, further reducing the reasons to buy it. In the UK, where sales start early next year, prices will start from about £14,000 – a lot, for a piece of cute automotive jewellery. Even Volkswagen admits the car is all about style rather than function – unlike the original Beetle, which was designed to motorise Germany. It at least shows that VW, Germany's doziest, most utilitarian car maker, has at last developed a sense of humour.

The new

Beetle looks almost identical with the "Concept One" design study, styled in VW's California studio, that was first shown at the Detroit Show four years ago. Since then, the Concept One has toured the world motor show circuit, to drum up publicity for the New Beetle. Once the green light was given, development shifted from California to Germany.

Concept One creator J Mays, former head of VW's Californian studio, was given no credit for the car at either the Detroit press conference or in subsequent interviews with VW high-ups. This is because he no longer works for the VW group. Three months ago he took up the top design job at Ford. Ford also kept him under wraps at the Detroit Show, lest he end up talking more about a new Volkswagen than upcoming new Fords.

The New Beetle shares no parts with the old Beetle. It doesn't even have that car's most famous mechanical feature, a rear engine. Instead, the two engines on offer – a 2.0-litre 115bhp four and a 1.9-litre 90bhp turbo-diesel – are both front-mounted and drive the front wheels. A 150bhp V5 engine will go on sale later. Most other mechanical parts, including the suspension, steering, brakes and transmissions, are also Golf-based. This has greatly reduced VW's development costs.

The car has been created largely for the American market, where Volkswagen sales have

plummeted since the halcyon days of the original Beetle. Back in the late Sixties, VW was selling half a million cars a year in North America, almost all of them Beetles. Last year, it sold 150,000 cars.

The New Beetle certainly won't send VW sales rocketing back to the level of 30 years ago. VW expects to sell 50,000 a year in North America, and the same again in the rest of the world.

All New Beetles will be made at VW's Mexican factory in Puebla, which already sources US-bound Golfs and Jettas. The factory, once noted for its dodgy build quality, has been completely overhauled to ensure that New Beetle reliability will be at least as good as that of the old Beetle.

One firm link with the past is that New Beetle production will run alongside that of the old, Mexico is now the only country to continue to build the old timer, for the Mexican and South American markets: it is still the biggest-selling car in history.

The New Beetle was undoubtedly the focus of Detroit, but the Yanks did at least have the odd home-grown product to cheer about. Most impressive new production car – rather more impressive than the Beetle, in fact – was the Ford Cougar. A Mecedes-based coupe that goes on sale in Europe this summer. It's a sharp, handsome machine, looking rather like a big brother to the Ford Puma coupe, and offers a choice of 2.0-litre

four or 2.5-litre V6 engines. Prices start at £18,000. The V6 will cost about £21,000. The US-made Cougar replaces the slow-selling, absurdly named Ford Probe.

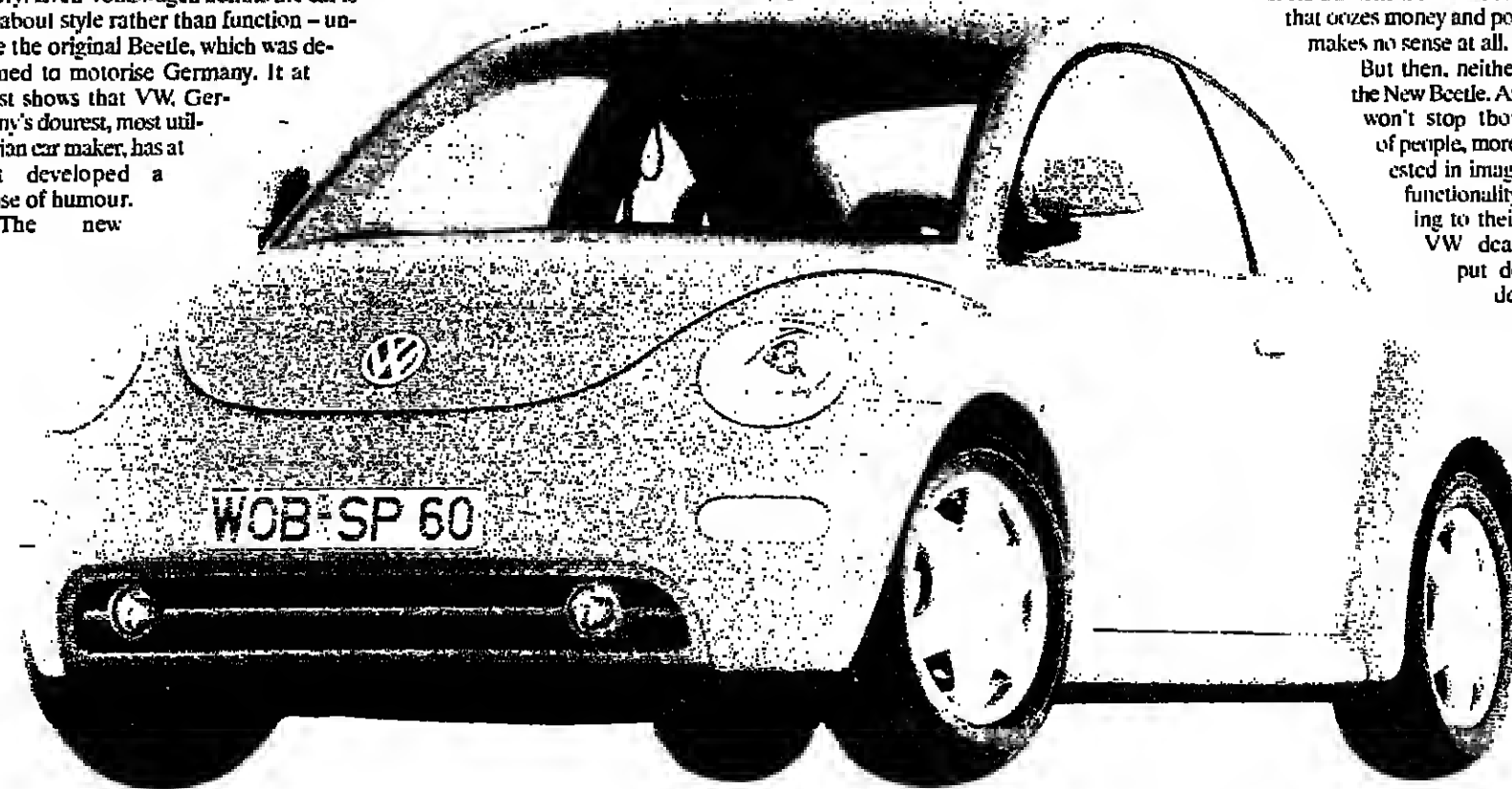
Lexus, Toyota's upmarket wing, unveiled its Range Rover rival, a 4x4 that is probably the most car-like off-roader we've ever seen, and is bound further to erode Land Rover's one-time dominance of the top-end 4x4 market. Honda unveiled a replacement for its Shuttle MPV, Saab has face-lifted the 900 and changed the name to 9-3, and the Yanks had the usual sprinkling of new, gas-guzzling pick-up trucks and huge off-roaders, while making a lot of noise about their research into the eco-friendly cars of the future.

Detroit is traditionally about brave-looking, albeit often irrelevant, "concept" cars, and Chrysler traditionally provides the lion's share of the entertainment. This year it had three concept vehicles. The most interesting was a cross between an open sports car and a 4x4: the Jeepster. The adjustable suspension raises the car to clear rocks and verges. Otherwise, it's a chunky ground-hugger with huge tyres. It may go into production.

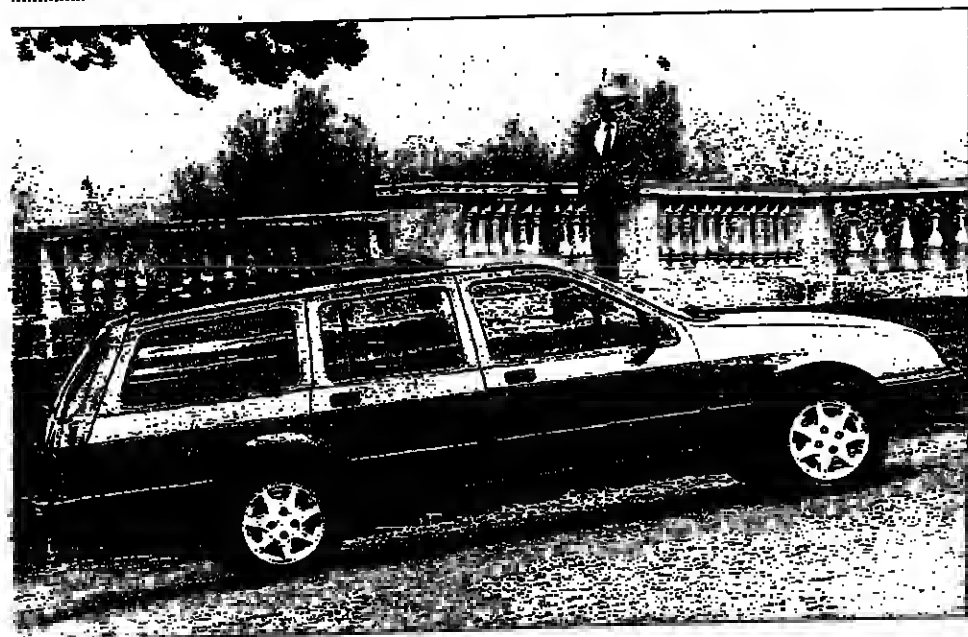
So may a Porsche Boxster-lookalike, mid-engined, plastic-bodied roadster – the Plymouth Pronto Spyder – which would be sold for half the price of the Porsche.

There was also a vast saloon called the Chrysler Chronos. It has a huge body, a tiny cockpit, and as much street presence as a road-going ocean liner. It looks fabulous, an old-fashioned, ostentatious Yank that oozes money and power. It makes no sense at all.

But then, neither does the New Beetle. And that won't stop thousands of people, more interested in image than functionality, racing to their local VW dealer to put down a deposit.



MY WORST CAR CHAS MCDEVITT'S FORD SIERRA ESTATE



Estate of the art: with more than 200,000 miles on the clock, Chas McDevitt's Sierra developed an allergy to water

The funny thing is that every car I've ever owned has been my worst car. I believe in getting value for money and that means buying a cheap car then running it into the ground. I rarely have to pay more than £1,000 and then run the car to at least 50,000 miles. For instance, I bought a Ford Cortina for £1,200 which had covered 30,000 miles. I ran it up to 280,000 miles and sold it for £200, so 200,000 miles' worth of motoring for £1,000 isn't bad is it?

I honestly don't think that my cars are any less reliable than brand-new ones, although the breakdowns are more memorable. A few years ago I was driving back in the early hours of the morning from a Water Rats charity function and giving a lift to Frankie Vaughan and Joe Brown. I dropped

off Frankie, but on the way to Joe's place in the countryside my multi-million-mile Ford Sierra estate cut out on a T-junction.

It was a filthy night, and I think my big mistake was driving through a puddle which drowned the electrics. We waited for an hour before another car passed by and they let us use their mobile to call Joe Brown's roadie to come and rescue us. He turned up in a big Citroën with a set of jump leads. Its alarm went off, lights flashed and locked us out. Now there were two stranded cars.

Eventually the police stopped, taking the roadie and Joe back to his house so that they could break in and find the spare keys for the Citroën. Meanwhile, I went off in search of a phone box to call the AA.

After ruining my Yves Saint Laurent suit

I got back to the Sierra and it started. I met the rescue truck a few miles later, said I was fine, then seconds later the car dies again. This time I put a bin liner on and started to walk towards civilisation... gave up, went back to sleep in the car. And it started. Meanwhile, Joe Brown had sent the roadie out on a trustless mission to find me with some sandwiches and hot tea. The Sierra had to go, Jimmy the Snail sold me a Vauxhall Cavalier estate for £340 and Joe Brown refused to get in a car with me for the next two years.

Chas McDevitt and his skills group had global success in 1987 with 'Freight Train'. His book 'Shuffle: The Road to UK Rock' is published by Robson Books. He was talking to James Ruppert.

ROAD TEST: DAIHATSU CUORE

Daihatsu's Cuore has a tricky name, a diminutive three-cylinder engine and comical perpendicular styling. As daft as it seems? Not quite, says Roger Bell.

Lightness (630kg, 12.4cwt) may not be conducive to crash safety, but it allows the Cuore's modest 850cc, 42-horsepower engine to punch above its size. Acceleration is nippy within urban limits, though overtaking calls for long-range planning – and often a couple of downshifts. Rev harsh, and a noisy boom assails the ears. Lavish sound insulation was not in the Cuore's design script. Nor were big-car refinement and comfort.

Although intended as a local runabout, the Cuore acquires itself surprisingly well on motorways because of its loping gait in overdrive fifth. Given a top speed of 85mph, law-abiding drivers will have no trouble holding a mid-lane station.

Whatever you think of the styling, it's not so weird as that of the Move, a five-door oddity that shares the pert Cuore's underpinnings and drivetrain. Up front, there's no shortage of room for two broad adults. Even in the back, there's more space than you'd expect to find in a car so small. Access to the extendable boot is through a top-hinged tailgate.

Ride comfort takes a back seat in this stiffly sprung micro, which bobbles and jerks on all but the smoothest roads. There are two sides to the car's handling. Steering is so sensitive at speed that the car seems to dart through corners as if guided by telepathy. Smoothness and delicacy are the watchwords if you're to avoid exposing a slightly nervous disposition. There's no evidence of this hypersensitivity around town, though. In fact you have to twist the wheel quite energetically to park.

Daihatsu has kept the Cuore's price down by restricting equipment. Although you get a driver's airbag, side-impact bars, a folding rear bench and an engine immobiliser, you have to work the windows and locks manually on the three-door. Even the radio's extra.



DAIHATSU CUORE

Specifications
Three-door, £6,500. Engine: 850cc, three cylinders, six valves, 42bhp at 5,300rpm. Transmission: five-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive. Performance: top speed 85mph, 0-60mph 15.6 seconds. Fuel consumption: 53.3mpg combined.

Rivals:
Fiat Cinquecento 900S, £6,647. Baby Fiat has cute, cheeky looks, endearing character. Slightly wider and heavier than Cuore, more fun to drive – especially as entertaining 1.1 Sporting.
Ford Ka, from £7,995. Great car, silly name, radical new-edge styling not to everyone's taste, as sales confirm. One size up from Cuore, nimble Ka is more

a dressed-up Fiesta than a city slicker. Power steering a must for agility.
Rover Mini, £8,995. In its twilight years, evergreen Mini is promoted (and priced) as smart wheels for the trendy, not the impecunious. Still brilliantly packaged but far too expensive. Terrific steering and handling, wretchedly uncomfortable ride and seats.

Seat Arosa 1.0, £6,995. Precursor of VW's sub-Polo Lupino, baby Arosa offers generous room in small package. Pert, well made, but lacking in zest. Cheap to run. Pricier automatic has bigger engine and greater thirst.
Skoda Felicia, £5,999+. A proper car, not a micro. No joke, top value: roomy five-door hatch honed by parent VW to respectable standard at low price. Worth spending extra for power steering.

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Q4 06 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 07 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 07 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 07 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 07 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 08 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 08 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 08 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 08 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 09 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 09 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 09 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 09 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 10 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 10 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 10 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 10 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 11 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 11 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 11 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 11 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 12 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 12 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 12 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 12 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 13 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 13 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 13 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 13 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 14 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 14 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 14 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 14 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 15 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 15 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 15 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 15 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 16 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 16 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 16 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 16 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 17 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 17 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 17 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 17 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 18 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 18 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 18 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 18 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 19 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 19 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 19 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 19 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 20 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 20 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 20 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 20 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 21 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 21 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 21 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 21 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 22 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 22 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 22 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 22 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 23 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 23 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 23 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 23 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 24 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 24 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 24 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 24 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 25 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 25 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 25 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 25 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 26 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 26 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 26 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 26 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 27 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 27 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 27 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 27 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 28 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 28 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 28 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 28 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 29 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 29 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 29 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 29 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 30 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 30 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 30 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 30 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 31 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 31 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 31 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 31 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 32 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 32 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 32 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 32 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 33 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 33 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 33 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 33 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 34 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 34 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 34 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 34 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 35 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 35 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 35 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 35 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 36 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 36 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 36 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 36 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 37 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 37 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 37 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 37 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 38 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 38 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 38 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 38 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 39 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 39 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 39 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 39 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 40 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 40 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 40 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 40 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 41 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 41 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 41 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 41 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 42 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 42 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 42 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 42 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 43 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 43 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 43 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 43 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 44 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 44 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 44 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 44 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 45 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 45 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 45 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 45 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 46 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 46 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 46 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 46 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 47 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 47 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 47 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 47 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 48 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 48 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 48 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 48 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 49 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 49 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 49 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 49 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 50 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 50 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 50 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 50 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 51 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 51 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 51 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 51 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 52 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 52 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 52 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 52 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 53 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 53 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 53 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 53 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 54 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 54 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 54 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 54 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 55 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 55 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 55 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 55 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 56 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 56 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 56 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 56 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 57 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 57 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 57 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 57 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 58 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 58 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 58 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 58 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 59 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 59 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 59 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 59 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 60 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 60 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 60 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 60 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 61 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 61 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 61 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 61 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 62 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 62 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 62 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 62 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 63 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 63 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 63 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 63 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 64 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 64 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 64 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 64 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 65 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 65 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 65 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 65 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 66 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 66 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 66 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 66 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 67 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 67 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 67 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 67 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 68 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 68 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 68 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 68 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 69 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 69 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 69 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 69 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 70 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 70 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 70 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 70 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 71 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 71 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 71 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 71 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 72 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 72 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 72 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 72 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 73 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 73 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 73 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 73 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 74 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 74 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 74 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 74 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 75 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 75 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 75 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 75 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 76 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 76 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 76 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 76 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 77 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 77 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 77 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 77 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 78 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 78 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 78 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 78 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 79 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 79 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 79 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 79 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 80 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 80 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 80 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 80 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 81 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 81 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 81 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 81 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 82 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 82 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 82 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 82 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 83 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 83 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 83 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 83 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 84 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 84 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 84 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 84 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 85 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 85 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 85 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 85 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 86 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 86 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 86 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 86 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 87 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 87 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 87 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 87 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 88 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 88 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 88 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 88 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 89 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 89 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 89 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 89 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 90 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 90 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 90 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 90 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 91 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 91 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 91 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 91 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 92 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 92 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 92 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 92 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 93 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 93 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 93 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 93 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 94 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 94 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 94 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 94 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 95 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 95 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 95 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 95 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 96 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 96 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 96 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 96 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 97 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 97 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 97 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 97 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 98 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 98 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 98 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 98 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 99 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 99 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 99 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 99 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 00 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 00 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 00 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 00 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 01 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 01 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 01 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 01 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 02 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 02 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 02 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 02 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 03 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 03 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 03 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 03 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 04 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 04 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 04 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 04 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 05 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 05 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 05 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 05 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 06 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 06 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 06 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 06 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 07 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 07 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 07 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 07 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 08 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 08 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 08 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 08 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 09 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 09 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 09 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 09 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 10 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 10 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 10 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 10 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 11 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 11 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 11 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 11 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 12 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 12 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 12 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 12 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 13 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 13 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 13 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 13 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 14 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 14 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 14 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 14 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 15 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 15 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 15 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 15 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 16 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 16 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 16 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 16 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 17 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 17 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 17 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 17 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 18 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 18 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 18 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 18 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 19 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 19 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 19 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 19 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 20 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 20 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 20 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 20 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 21 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 21 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 21 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 21 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 22 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 22 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 22 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 22 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 23 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 23 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 23 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 23 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 24 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 24 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 24 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 24 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 25 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 25 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 25 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 25 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 26 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 26 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 26 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 26 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 27 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 27 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 27 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 27 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 28 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 28 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 28 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 28 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 29 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 29 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 29 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 29 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 30 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 30 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 30 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 30 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 31 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 31 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 31 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 31 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 32 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 32 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 32 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 32 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 33 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 33 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 33 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 33 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 34 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 34 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 34 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 34 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 35 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 35 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 35 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 35 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 36 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 36 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 36 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 36 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 37 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 37 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 37 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 37 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 38 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 38 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 38 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 38 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 39 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 39 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 39 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 39 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 40 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 40 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 40 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 40 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 41 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 41 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 41 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 41 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 42 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 42 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 42 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 42 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 43 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 43 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 43 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 43 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 44 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 44 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 44 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 44 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 45 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 45 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 45 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 45 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 46 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 46 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 46 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 46 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 47 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 47 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 47 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 47 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 48 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 48 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 48 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 48 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 49 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 49 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 49 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 49 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 50 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 50 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 50 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 50 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 51 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 51 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 51 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 51 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 52 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 52 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 52 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 52 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 53 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 53 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 53 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 53 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 54 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 54 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 54 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 54 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 55 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 55 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 55 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 55 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 56 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 56 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 56 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 56 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 57 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 57 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 57 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 57 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 58 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 58 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 58 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 58 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 59 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 59 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 59 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 59 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 60 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 60 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 60 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 60 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 61 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 61 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 61 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 61 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 62 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 62 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 62 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 62 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 63 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 63 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 63 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 63 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 64 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 64 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 64 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 64 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 65 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 65 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 65 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 65 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 66 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 66 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 66 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 66 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 67 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 67 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 67 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 67 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 68 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 68 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 68 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 68 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 69 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 69 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 69 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 69 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 70 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 70 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 70 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 70 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 71 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 71 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 71 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 71 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 72 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 72 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 72 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 72 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 73 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 73 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 73 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 73 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 74 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 74 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 74 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 74 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 75 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 75 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 75 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 75 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 76 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 76 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 76 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 76 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 77 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 77 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 77 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 77 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 78 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 78 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 78 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 78 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 79 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 79 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 79 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 79 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 80 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 80 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 80 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 80 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 81 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 81 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 81 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 81 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 82 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 82 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 82 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 82 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 83 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 83 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 83 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 83 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 84 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 84 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 84 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 84 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 85 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 85 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 85 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 85 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 86 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 86 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 86 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 86 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 87 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 87 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 87 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 87 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 88 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 88 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 88 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 88 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 89 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 89 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 89 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 89 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 90 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 90 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 90 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 90 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 91 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 91 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 91 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 91 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 92 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 92 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 92 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 92 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 93 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 93 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 93 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 93 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 94 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 94 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 94 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 94 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 95 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 95 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 95 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 95 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 96 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 96 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 96 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 96 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 97 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 97 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 97 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 97 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 98 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 98 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 98 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 98 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 99 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 99 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 99 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 99 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 00 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 00 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 00 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 00 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 01 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 01 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 01 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 01 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 02 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 02 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 02 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 02 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 03 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 03 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 03 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 03 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 04 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 04 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 04 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 04 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 05 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 05 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 05 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 05 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 06 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 06 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 06 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 06 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 07 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 07 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 07 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 07 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 08 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 08 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 08 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 08 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 09 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 09 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 09 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 09 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 10 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 10 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 10 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 10 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 11 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 11 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 11 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 11 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 12 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 12 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 12 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 12 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 13 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 13 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 13 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 13 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 14 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 14 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 14 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 14 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 15 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 15 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 15 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 15 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 16 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 16 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 16 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 16 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 17 | | | | | | | | | | Q2 17 | | | | | | | | | | Q3 17 | | | | | | | | | | Q4 17 | | | | | | | | | | Q1 18 | | | | | | | | | |
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The beastly buyers who ask to enter early

The buyer of a dilapidated property may want early access to get a head start on vital repairs. The seller, confident in the buyer's integrity and his contractual safeguards, may be amenable. To the seller's solicitor, though, any risk at all should be avoided. Granting early access, Robert Liebman has learned, is inherently risky.

Some buyers request, even demand, access to begin refurbishing a property after they have exchanged contracts but before completion. Long-neglected and even derelict properties, especially those which are repossessions or in the hands of executors, are likely candidates.

Once contracts have been exchanged, many sellers are willing to comply with such requests, bolstered by the deposit in their pockets, the contract in their solicitor's safe, and the buyer's insurance policies. A solicitor worth his shekels, however, will insist that it isn't over until the fat lady sings.

"Normally, if a buyer wants early access, I would encourage them to complete sooner," says Edward Bliss, residential property solicitor with the central London firm Maples Teesdale. Early access should be denied whenever possible.

It is not always possible. Plumbing, a common culprit, might need fixing or might not even exist. "A property with no bathroom at all would be unsuitable for human habitation, and we might insist on at least some work before completion," a Halifax spokesperson says. An insistent buyer might make early access a condition of the sale, and an executor of an unmodernised property might

desperately want to clinch a deal. Lenders and solicitors alike agree that, if early access is granted, the property should be vacant and contracts already exchanged. "The seller has full legal rights to have the property back," Mr Bliss says. "Nevertheless, the danger is if the buyers refuse to move out or return the keys, it might be necessary to enforce the seller's legal rights by taking the matter to court. This is time-consuming and costly, and always contains an element of risk for the seller."

In granting early access, Mr Bliss insists on "various minimum requirements. The buyer undertakes to enter only as a licensee, and to acknowledge that they won't take actual occupation until completion. They must also return the keys daily to the estate agent."

The estate agent may be entitled to additional compensation for the extra work involved in handling the keys and monitoring compliance with the early-access conditions. Mr Bliss says: "The purchaser also has to be responsible for utilities such as gas and electricity and where possible take over the insurance."

Such safeguards mean that early-access arrangements tend to end happily – ultimately. "On several occasions the buyer failed to complete on the actual completion date specified in the contract," Mr Bliss says. "Typically it turns out to be technical delays, but my client and his solicitor both get jittery. Even with so-called fast-track court proceedings, it can still take quite some time."

Jitters are justified. One estate agent knows of "several instances in which buyers have pulled houses to bits and then, for various reasons, been unable to complete". Joanna Haydon-Knowell, who owns J H-K Estate Agents in Muswell Hill, north London, says: "Sometimes my gut reaction is to dis-

trust a buyer. I advise against early access."

One buyer benefiting from early access was Ms Haydon-Knowell herself, transforming a house that, requiring new bathroom, new kitchen, and new everything, also needed a new front foundation because of subsidence.

Her vendor did himself no favours. "He insisted on a reinstatement clause but took no photographs to display the original state. His contract was nebulous."

Sellers sometimes foolishly cut corners, she warns. "It happens when a solicitor charges an additional £100 or £200 to compose the access clauses. To avoid the unexpected expense, some sellers naively rely on a verbal instead of a written agreement."

The saving is false and dangerous – and unnecessary. The extra cost could and should be absorbed by the buyer. And the emotional reassurance is worth

There are tales of people rifling through papers, borrowing the toothbrush, even using the bed for conjugal activities

the price in any event, advises Ms Haydon-Knowell, who was 1995 Estate Agent of the Year.

An informal version of early access occurs frequently. "We do it all the time," says a London estate agent, referring to the forbidden but widespread practice of casually lending keys to buyers whom they have come to know and trust. It should never be considered acceptable, even if the buyer only wants to measure up.

There are stories of buyers looking in wardrobes, rifling

through papers, cleaning their teeth with the occupier's toothbrush and even using the bed for conjugal activities.

Some vendors, having agreed to minor redecoration and refurbishment, return home to find paint stains on their clothing or new windows in every room. For some buyers, measuring up includes the actual laying of carpets or hanging of curtains. And if measuring up can be defined so broadly, it can easily include sanding floorboards, fiddling with central heating, or drilling holes in walls. Gouged floors, a flood or a fire can be the consequence. Even if the physical damage is entirely covered by insurance, the legal, administrative and emotional problems may be considerable.

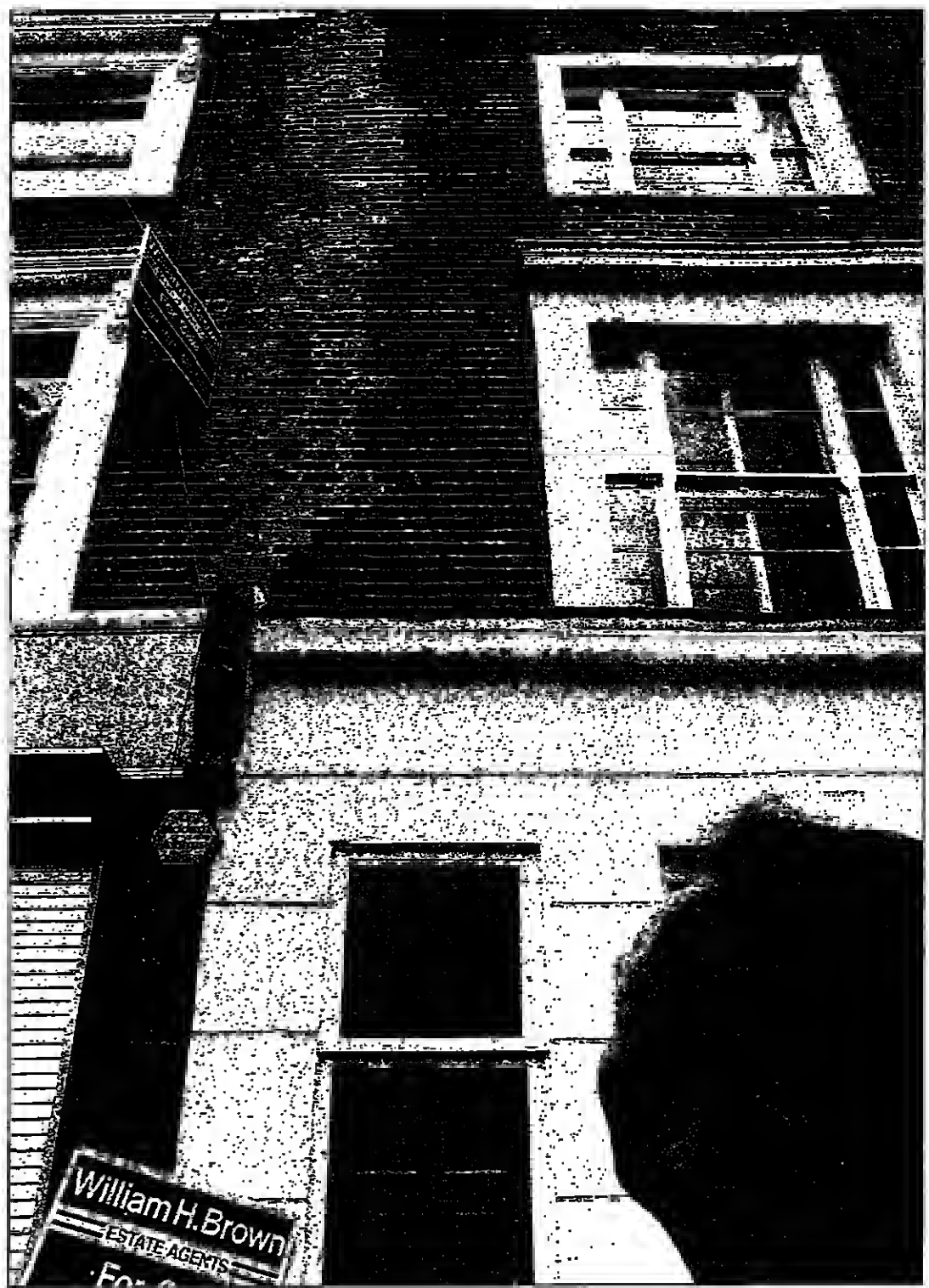
Ms Haydon-Knowell recently handled a sale to a developer who, hating to let, persuaded the seller to release the keys for an unaccompanied visit for one day only. The buyer duly returned the key that same day but not after making a duplicate, and surreptitiously refurbishing the entire property throughout the rest of the week.

What if he went bankrupt and failed to complete both the purchase and the renovations? The value of a single-family house that had been turned into not-quite-finished flats might easily plummet. The deposit could prove to be far less than the cost of repairing the damage.

It is hardly surprising, then, that Mr Bliss "insists on at least the full 10 per cent deposit on exchange, and we try for 15 per cent if it seems feasible".

Sellers should also actively monitor their property, seeing who is doing what, and when they are doing it.

Maples Teesdale, 21 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A 3DU, 0171 831 6501; J H-K, 338 Muswell Hill Broadway, London N10, 0181 883 3485.



On the safe side: many in the property business advise against letting buyers in early

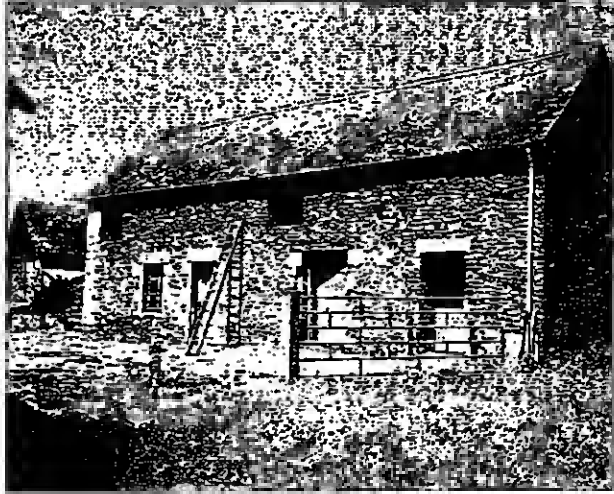
Photograph: Edward Sykes

INTERNATIONAL PROPERTIES/ THREE TO VIEW AND WHY BUY NOW

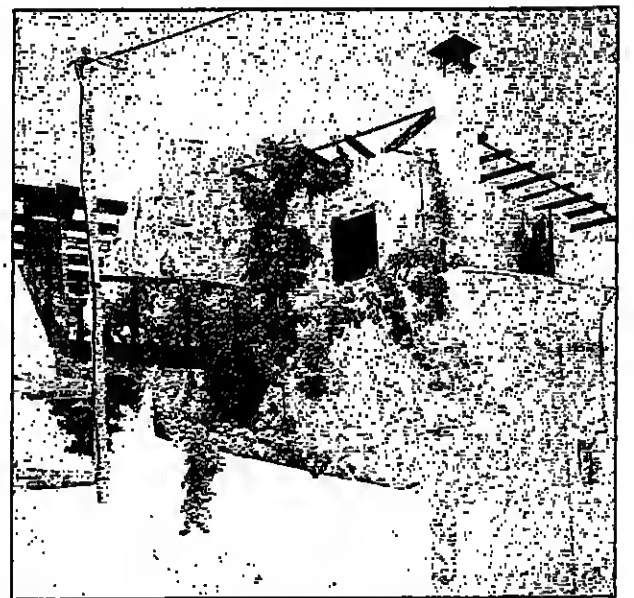
L'Aubade – "Dawn Chorus" – is the highest house above Franschoek, in the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa. In private woodland with two small vineyards, the Dutch-style house was built in 1986. There is a study, library, games room, swimming pool, five bedrooms and two cottages. The vineyard Price £875,000, through Knight Frank (0171 629 8171).



In Normandy, around £78,000 will buy a stone-built house and barn in quarter of an acre on the edge of a tiny village near Pré-en-Pail. Water and electricity are close. The barn and stable is one large room with a wood partition. There is a good slate roof, the attic is floored and could make three or four bedrooms. Splendid isolation 00 33 2 43 03 09 211.



For £85,000 comes an old stone house in Kato Elounda, on Crete, in a village used as a location for the film *Shirley Valentine*. The renovated two-bedroom, two-bath-room house has a sitting room with fireplace, courtyard garden and roof terrace. Geraniums tangle over the front wall and it is a short walk to the beach. Crete Property Consultants (0171 3281829).



Tide changes for overseas property

A decade ago, the number of UK agents specialising in foreign property was estimated to be more than 2,000. A few years – and a market collapse – later, that figure was down to a handful. Now the number is rising again, with sellers able to command good prices. Steve Emmett offers buyers tips on finding the right agent and the right property.

Quiet as the dawn, a new era has crept upon us. Acclimatised to hard times, developers and agents have been caught with their trousers firmly fastened around their ankles. There is now a realisation that, by and large, the glut of properties has gone; good property in sought-after locations is beginning to fetch a premium. Property which had been on the market since the early Nineties has now started to change hands. And what is more, while price inflation is not what it was 10 years ago, prices are again on the move.

To borrow an over-used phrase, the world is getting

smaller. Thirty years ago the British prime minister holidayed in the Scilly Isles; today it is the palm-fringed beaches of the Indian Ocean. For the masses, Benidorm and Fuengirola have replaced Brighton and Bognor, a kind of gentrification or, perhaps more accurately, a maturing of tastes across the board.

The result is a rich and diverse market-place, a far cry from the early years of chartered plane-loads of would-be buyers being shipped out to Malaga and Mahon every Saturday. In short, if you want to acquire a home abroad, be it for holidays, retirement or investment, there is a world to choose from.

Before commencing your search it is worthwhile making a few notes to guide you.

What is the purpose of the acquisition? If it is for a week-end retreat you are likely to reach a different conclusion than if you want something for six months a year. Similarly, if you are a winter-sports fanatic you can save yourself the inspection trips to Florida. Those may be over-simplifications but the principle applies generally.

Do you speak the language of your chosen country? If not, it is necessary to learn it and, perhaps more important, can you learn it? If you are on a tight budget, what is the cost of

owning and running a property? What is the cost of travel? If you are retiring, how does it affect your pension? Healthcare? The list is almost endless. Most national and international newspapers and magazines carry advertisements from agencies and developers with property to sell in the most popular countries and resorts. Take care. As with any trade, there are good and bad operators. Make sure that you are dealing

with someone who has experience and a track record. Ask to speak with past clients. Ideally, stick to agencies belonging to a recognised professional or trade body – and check that organisation out too. Time spent now in choosing the right agent will save you time, trouble and probably money in the long.

The Federation of Overseas Property Developers, Agents and Consultants (Fopdac) is the UK's leading trade organisation

for those dealing with the sale and servicing of property outside the UK. Fopdac membership has recently increased and the range of countries offered by member firms is considerable. A list of members, as well as legal notes, are available on request. The National Association of Estate Agents, known more for UK domestic property, has an international section which continues to develop year on year. Again, details of

members dealing in overseas property can be obtained from their offices.

FIABCI (The International Real Estate Federation) is represented throughout the world by accredited professional bodies. In the UK it is the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). It is fair to say that Fopdac and NAEA members are mostly involved with residential property while FIABCI has a commercial leaning.

Whatever your choice – studio flat or villa, cottage or castle; sun and sea or mountains and lakes – the early part of 1998 has to be a good time to buy, especially if you have funds in sterling. All forecasts are for a strengthening of European currencies as interest rate differentials narrow between the UK and its EU counterparts.

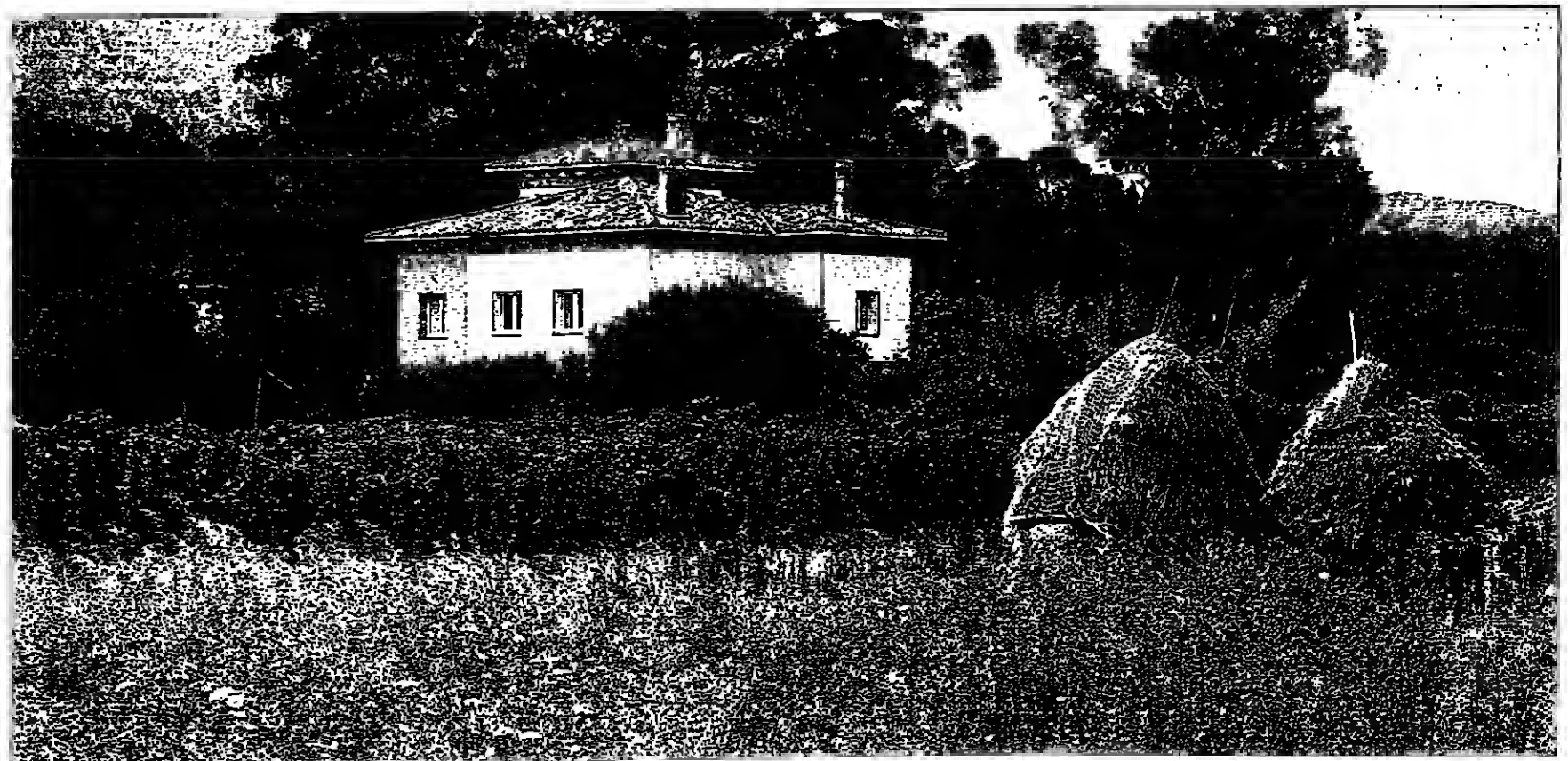
It is important to be cautious in such a venture; after all, a home abroad is more than

likely to be your single biggest investment after your home in the UK. Keeping things in perspective allows plenty of room for realising that the vast majority of people are happy with their purchases and get many years of enjoyment from them. Wherever your search takes you, have fun.

Fopdac 0181 941 5588; NAEA 01926 496800; FIABCI, 0171 222 7000

Very unBritish: Las Isla near Colunga on Spain's Costa Verde

RHPL



When the minimalist's loft space presents a minor problem



The grand scale: Grace Green and sisters like to spread themselves in the loft. Their parents have decided on more conventional living.
Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Acacia Avenue is out and the urban loft is in. People with children tend to choose the former's neat privets and net curtains but can minimalist be compatible with children?

Ginetta Vedrickas pressed the intercoms of some riverside conversions to find the families behind the stylish façades.

Nicola and Nigel Green live in 1,500 square feet of a converted Victorian canvas house near Tower Bridge in London. Originally used for storing flags and marquees, it is now a modern "space" consisting mostly of one huge room with striped floors, exposed brickwork and metal columns.

The ceiling beams still have signs for Wimbledon and Lords, reminding visitors of the building's original purpose. You

might be forgiven for thinking the Greens are smart single types in a designer setting but the bright plastic toys which Ms Green likens to "volcanic lava erupting" give away the apartment's other inhabitants: Grace, aged five, Florence, two, and Millie seven months.

Open-plan living had always been a dream for the Greens, design consultants, who moved from their Wimbledon Victorian terrace when Grace was born. Why choose such an unusual property for your family home? "Living here with one baby was fine and I was told I couldn't have any more," Ms Green says.

Three daughters later, is the aspirational canvas house child-friendly? "People walk in and say 'oh, it must be wonderful for children' and it is, but they do go a bit mad in this large space. It's hectic but I can watch them while I'm cooking," says Ms Green. She thought their home was unconventional until, "a mum at Grace's school said she couldn't have a party because of their dangerous

metal staircases and I realised everyone in her class probably lives in a place like this".

The Greens, however, find their home is brilliant for children's parties: "We had the whole class, a children's entertainer and the parents in another corner with no problem." Are they purists when it comes to minimalism? "I am very ordered but there's more storage space than in a traditional loft," says Ms Green, who has given up trying to stem the flow of toys.

Living in a stylish space with children can lead to inventive adaptations which are not normally part of an architect's brief. "The columns are a bit dangerous but I've wrapped cushions around so they can't crash into them and I've tied the ladder in the library area with rope," Ms Green says. Are there particular aspects of life that are difficult? "It's hard getting in and out down the stairs with the baby and all our shopping is delivered - it's a bit

like living in the middle of the country."

Down-river from the Greens, in a converted factory, lives a photographer. After 20 years in the States he was attracted to loft style living for himself and his two children who helped design the shell: "Their favourite place to roam was HMS Belfast where they liked to pretend they were pointing guns at the tourist boats."

This pastime resulted in the apartment's nautical theme: "There's a ship's ladder up to a galleryed sleeping and play platform where you sit on deck. Adults can't stand up there and it's got portholes where the kids spy down to where I live and work - they love it."

When the architect had trouble fitting the ladders he was dispatched to HMS Belfast to "see how the Navy do it". The family loves the "avant garde" area but find the dearth of good schools a big disadvantage. "There's a lot of money round here but people are unwilling to put something back in to the community."

Mark Coulter, negotiator for Chesterton's estate agency at Tower Bridge, says people tend to sell their warehouses when they have children. "It's like buying a sports car - fun when you're young but with kids you want something more practical."

Edmund and Rosalie Hall have no plans to move from their architect-designed space in Highbury, London, where they live with two-year-old Lola. After trying unsuccessfully to have children for 11 years they sold their "family home" and set about planning "a child-free pad".

"We took out all the walls and made one huge space with an open staircase in the middle," Mr Hall says. "When we found out Rosalie was pregnant it came right out of the blue but even then we didn't think about redesigning."

When Lola started crawling, the stairs became a problem. "We had the architect add stair rails which she wasn't happy about as she thinks the flat's too

cluttered." The Halls find lack of privacy the main disadvantage of open-plan living but are compromising by buying the flat below and turning it into bedrooms. They do not see themselves heading for suburbia. "The space here is fantastic for children," Mr Hall says.

For the Greens, though, despite all the attractions of their lifestyle, it is time to move on. Has the lure of Betjeman's "chintzy, chintzy cheeriness" enticed the Greens to sell their canvas house? "We are moving to a more traditional house where we can walk into a garden," says Mrs Green, who has mixed feelings about leaving.

The other families in their block have also moved. "People tend to be a bit more sensible when the children reach school age. I love being by the river, where there is always something going on. If it were just us, we would stay. But we are choosing a whole new way of life."

The canvas house is for sale through Chestertons (0171 357 7999).

How to break into home ownership without raiding the bank

How do you buy a home of your own when the only savings you have are the contents of your piggy bank?

Felicity Connell goes in search of the best deals.

Despite the recent housing-market revival, the 100 per cent mortgage, a product of the lending frenzy in the late 1980s, is harder now to find. While they are still around, most lenders are unwilling to offer a loan for the full value of a home, lest they find themselves thousands of pounds out of pocket in the event of another house price collapse and defaults by borrowers.

If you have barely enough money to buy the furniture, should you be considering buying the house? Some would argue that given the length of council waiting lists, a shortage of private rental accommodation and the astronomical rents for property available, paying a mortgage, even with all the encumbrances, may seem preferable.

The most popular way to buy a home with very little initial expense is to buy new. The large house-builders have enough financial security and freedom to offer substantial incentives to tempt buyers. If your piggy bank holds £99 you might just make it.

Barratt Homes started the scheme with a "£250 deposit and move in" offer. That has just been reduced to £99, partly to encourage buyers during the winter months, traditional-

ly the quietest time in the housing market. Buyers put down a reservation fee of £99, move in, and then get up to 20 weeks to save for their deposit, in monthly amounts based on what the mortgage repayments will be.

After 20 weeks or when the deposit is paid, whichever is the sooner, buyers start making mortgage repayments. In certain developments the company will also pay half the deposit, matching monthly savings pound for pound.

This is a scheme particularly suited to those renting a property. "It helps break the Catch 22 situation of having enough monthly income to pay for a mortgage but watching it disappear in rent," says Dave Simpson, of Barratt Homes North.

That was the situation facing Angela and Jannick Charpentier. They now own a three bedroom house in Beckton, east London, bought from Barratt for £97,000, with an initial deposit of £250. Within five months, with no rent or mortgage to pay, the deposit was raised, half from the Charpentiers, half from Barratt.

"It is hard to save for a deposit when you are paying rent, and if it hadn't been for this scheme we would have had to rent again," Mrs Charpentier says. "With help towards our legal and survey costs, in all, the package has saved us about £4,000."

Beazer Homes is another company offering such incentives on around 250 developments across the country, with the added bonus of no deposit to pay.



Home-lovin' gal: Angela Charpentier and husband put down only £250

A first-time buyer can buy a house for an initial £99, the company pays the 5 per cent deposit and the buyer then takes on a 95 per cent mortgage. The deposit is only paid back if the buyer cancels the deal. In certain developments, the company will also pay £500 towards legal fees, which should easily

cover straightforward conveyancing.

At its Waterside development near Rugby, Beazer is offering a choice of 5 per cent deposit paid or free curtains and carpets. No contest. Raid the local jumble sales for the curtains and buy a pair of slippers to keep your feet warm on the

floorboards and move in.

Both companies stress that these deals are not a case of giving with one hand and taking away with another. Mortgages are arranged through the main high street lenders at standard interest rates.

The downside of buying through any scheme in a new

development, be it part-exchange, cashbacks, deposit delayed or waived entirely, has always been that there is no bargaining power. The full asking price must be paid.

But in the current climate of gazumping and properties being snapped up even before construction, these deals are

acceptable, as long as an independent valuation agrees with the purchase price.

If you have neither the money for a deposit, nor sufficient income to obtain a mortgage for the full purchase price, a rent/buy scheme may be an option. Do-it-yourself-shared-ownership (Diyo) is operated by housing associations, and is exactly as it sounds.

The buyer finds a property, arranges a mortgage for his share, with the housing association putting up the rest. The buyer's share can be between 25 per cent and 75 per cent with rent paid to the housing association on the remainder. Gradually, further shares can be bought until the property is owned outright.

The advantage of this scheme is that buyers are not confined to new housing estates. As long as the property is considered mortgageable, fit for immediate occupation and structurally sound, any residential property on the open market and within a certain price band can theoretically be purchased. And a habitable home does not mean a new kitchen, fitted carpets and central heating - the basic amenities will do.

Joe and Linda Griffin and their two teenage children left their run-down council estate for a three-bedroom house of their choice in a desirable area of Enfield, north London. The family approached Metropolitan Housing Association, and Mr Griffin, a self-employed plasterer, says: "We were told we could pay half mortgage/half rent for any house we wanted

to buy from the open market so long as it was within our limit of £71,000. It was amazing that it was all so easy to understand and we were impressed with how affordable it was. We went out looking for a house straight away."

Priority is given to council tenants and those on the waiting lists for both council and housing associations, as the

'It was amazing that it was all so easy to understand and we were impressed with how affordable it was'

remainder of the purchase price is met by local government funding.

Applicants must be able to cover legal and survey fees but have no need to raise a deposit. They simply need to show that they can sustain monthly payments. Rent levels on the non-owned share are strictly controlled, but there is no other safety net in sharing the property with a housing association. Once you step on to the housing ladder, you are subject to all the pitfalls - mortgage rises, repossession - that a company the delights of home ownership.

Diyo information from the Housing Corporation, 0171 357 2000.

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reports from